TASMANIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

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DISSERTATION

A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

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The truth is not grey, it is black and white in patches. And there is nothing black or white, but thinking makes it so. - G. M. Trevelyan. [1]

ABSTRACT

It is widely accepted that philosophy of history may be divided into two main parts: analytical philosophy of history and, what is variously termed substantive, or speculative philosophy of history.

The former is taken by many writers to be what Gardiner calls "a second-order form of inquiry"[2] having as an aim not "to elucidate and assess the human past itself, but ... to elucidate and assess the ways in which historians typically describe or comprehend that past."[3] It has to do with such matters as "the presuppositions underlying historical narratives, the categories implicit in historical judgement and explanation, and the modes of argument whereby historical conclusions are supported or established."[4] It is in part two of this dissertation that consideration is given to some of the issues and questions which typically appear under the rubric "analytical philosophy of history."

Speculative or substantive philosophy of history generally takes as its subject matter history as a whole. For writers whose works have been assigned by critics to this category of inquiry a major concern has frequently been that of seeking order in the apparently chaotic stream of historical events. Attempts have been made to discern "meaning" or "significance" in the course of events; to see in events the embodiment of a principle, or a necessary component in an overall scheme of things, the final realization of which may be worldly or otherworldly. The course of events is variously seen as serving the end of the perfectibility of man and his social relations or the eschatological vision of religion.

Attempts have been made by some writers, impressed by the advances made by science through the formulation of laws and generalizations, to discover universal laws of human nature or of history by which the events of

history could be explained (and, as implied by some, predicted) with the same certainty and precision found in science.

The status of empirical inquiry has frequently been claimed for "speculative philosophies of history." But this has been denied by practising historians and philosophers distrustful of the over-predominant aprioristic overtones found in these writings. As Dray has pointed out, "the construction of speculative systems of history is ... somewhat out of fashion"[5] but has "still not quite achieved the fossil status often attributed to cosmology."[6] He cites as the reason for this the predominantly Judaic-Christian nature of our culture and the expectation that history should be "meaningful."

Part one consists of an historical outline of philosophical reflection on history and incorporates consideration of the ideas of "speculative philosophers of history."

References

1. G. M. Trevelyan, "Clio Rediscovered", in F. Stern, ed., The Varieties of History, (Macmillan, London, 1970), p. 244.
2. P. Gardiner, The Philosophy of History (Oxford University Press, 1974) p. 3.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. W. H. Dray, Philosophy of History (Prentice-Hall, 1964) p. 2.
6. ibid.

PART ONE:

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON HISTORY FROM THE GREEKS TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

INTRODUCTION.

Meyerhoff describes Thucydides (c.455 B.C. - c.400 B.C.) as a supreme figure in "the art of history"[1] and points out that nowhere in the ancient world may be found a philosophy of history, either in the speculative sense, or in the analytic sense.

Within Jewish and Christian tradition there developed an historical consciousness which has continued, with modification, to the present age. History was seen as imbued with religious significance; in the course of events was discerned the hand of Divine Providence. The goal of history in the Christian conception is a condition of man beyond history and in the perspective of this goal the evil and contradictions inherent in the flow of temporal events could be explained.

Meyerhoff sees the eighteenth century as completing "the emancipation of history from theology."[2] History was discovered as "an autonomous, self-sufficient domain"[3] and there was created an historical consciousness "which was predominantly immanent, not transcendent"[4] employing "rational, not religious concepts."[5]

Vico, (1668-1744) recognized today as the most significant figure in the change of emphasis in historical thinking, still used the concept of "Providence". But, according to Karl Löwith, with Vico this concept "has become as natural, secular, and historical as if it did not exist at all."[6] He points out further, that nothing remains in his use of the concept of the "transcendent and miraculous operation which characterizes the faith in providence from Augustine to Bossuet."[7]

The search for a meaning of history continued. Writers like Kant, (1724-1804), Condorcet (1743-1794), and Herder (1744-1803) discerned evolutionary tendencies in historical change generally in the direction of the progressive improvement of man and his social relations. For Hegel (1770-1831) history was intelligible as the progress of Reason. And, as Meyerhoff points out, history was for Hegel "as unmistakably a theodicy as for St.

Augustine; only he used reason, instead of faith to justify the ways of God."[8]

The nineteenth century marked the waning of the traditional philosophical approach to history and the assumption of some kind of metaphysical determinism as providing a clue to the meaning of history. The two most prominent influences on historical thinking were the development of an empirical, scientific approach in historical scholarship and the development of a line of thinking called "historicism."

The term "historicism" results largely from Friedrich Meinecke's Die Entstehung des Historismus and is used to denote, says Tholfsen, an approach whereby the historian "seeks to grasp each phenomenon in its uniqueness and individuality while simultaneously placing it in a dynamic context of development, embracing continuity and change."[9] Commager's call - "Let us so immerse ourselves in the past that we can see with their eyes, hear with their ears, think as they thought, and feel as they must have felt: only by emancipating ourselves from the present and re-entering into the past can we be true to history; only by this renunciation of our own personalities can we hope to recover the character of the past."[10] - encompasses part of the historicist ideal. Herder, one of the earliest and most prominent spokesmen for historicist ideas also stressed the principle of empathy as a methodological tool for the historian. He must feel his way into a period of history.

As the basic theses of historicism included recognition of the manifold variety and unique individuality of the multiplicity of events comprising the subject matter of history, it was generally thought that history would not be susceptible of being cast into a rational, universal system whereby its meaning could be discovered in accordance with some deterministic or teleological principle. Marwick, however, cites Hegel and German historians of the Ranke school as seeing history "as a providential process, in which every event and circumst-

ance was justified in the light of the whole"[11] and notes that this is how some authorities would define the term "historicism" (which, incidentally, he describes here as a "dread" term and elsewhere as "troublesome"). This latter definition is in similar vein to the one proposed by Popper below.[12]

Further important aspects of the historicist tradition emerged also in the writings of idealist philosophers, Collingwood and Croce, especially in the stress they laid on the autonomy of history.

The development of critical methods for evaluating historical sources and collating the results in accordance with rigorous standards of objectivity led to the hope (and belief) that history could take a place as an equal partner with science. Prominent among writers developing the idea of history as an empirical, scientific discipline were Ranke, Buckle, Bury and Fustel de Coulanges.

The claim of scientific status is frequently made for Marx's theories. The dogmatic nature of his writings, however, and the prominence of emotive, propagandist social stereotypes in his works cast considerable doubt on the tenability of this claim. A more appropriate place for Marx's writings would appear to be in the positivistic and scientific stream of historicism noted by Meyerhoff[13] as diverging from the earlier mainstream, and which, as Popper described it,[14] embodied the assumption that historical prediction was the principal aim of the social sciences.

The early twentieth century saw a waning of the belief that history could be accommodated in the framework of the empirical sciences. And the re-emergence of speculative philosophy of history containing deterministic or teleological elements, as evident in Toynbee's writings, appears to have stopped short before the barrier of rigorous conceptual and methodological analysis encompassed by analytical philosophy of history.

References

1. H. Meyerhoff, ed., The Philosophy of History in Our Time, (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 1.
2. ibid., p. 5.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
6. K. Löwith, Meaning in History, (The University of Chicago Press, 1949) P. 123.
7. ibid.
8. Meyerhoff, op. cit., p. 7.
9. T. R. Tholfsen, Historical Thinking (Harper and Row, 1967), p. 7.
10. H. S. Commager, The Nature and the Study of History, (Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus, Ohio, 1965), p. 57.
11. A. Marwick, The Nature of History, (Macmillan London, 1970), p. 37.
12. p. 3.
13. Meyerhoff, op. cit., p. 12.
14. K. Popper, The Poverty of Historicism, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) p. 3.

CHAPTER 1: FROM THE GREEKS TO THE BEGINNINGS OF THE AGE OF SCIENCE.

(i) The Greeks.

Tholfsen sees[1] Thucydides as writing a history that succeeded in explaining individual events in the light of the universal characteristics of human nature. He quotes a passage where, he says, Thucydides made explicit his conception of the relationship between human nature and historical knowledge:

> It will be enough for me, however if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and, which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same way, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever.[2]

Tholfsen points out[3] that although a strong sense of the regularities underlying human behaviour informed Thucydides' thought, he didnot conceive of his generalizations as scientific "laws".

Herodotus, (c.484 B.C. - c.425 B.C.) notes A. L. Rowse,[4] was the father of both social history and anthropology. Will Durant mentions how he finds room for a thousand interesting illustrations of the dress, manners, morals, and beliefs of the societies he describes - "how Egyptian cats jump into the fire, how the Danubians get drunk on smells, how the walls of Babylon were built, how the Massagetae eat their parents, and how the priestess of Athena at Pedasus grew a mighty beard."[5]

E. H. Carr notes that he differed from Thucydides, who is accused of having no clear conception of causation, in that he specifically sought the causes of events, vide the introduction to his Histories - "This is a presentation of the Inquiries of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, to the end that time may not obliterate the great and marvellous deeds of the Hellenes and the Barbarians; and especially that the causes for which they waged war with one another may not be forgotten."[6]

In addition to the instructive and practical purpose of history suggested by Thucydides, there is another viewpoint of the purpose of history centred on the dichotomy of man and nature.

Hannah Arendt says[7] that Herodotus' understanding of the task of history - to save human deeds from the futility that comes from oblivion - was rooted in the Greek concept and experience of nature. "Since the things of nature are ever-present, they are not likely to be overlooked or forgotten; and since they are forever, they do not need human remembrance for their future existence."[8] Mortality became the hallmark of human existence.

> ... the great deeds and works of which mortals are capable, and which become the topic of historical narrative, are not seen as parts of either an encompassing whole or a process; on the contrary, the stress is always on single instances and single gestures. These single instances, deeds or events, interrupt the circular movement of daily life ... The subject matter of history is these interruptions - the extraordinary, in other words.[9]

In the beginning of Western history Arendt sees[10] the distinction between the mortality of men and the immortality of nature, between man-made things and things which come into being by themselves, as the tacit assumption of historiography.

The Greeks, she says[11], saw immortality as the common denominator between the concepts of nature and history.

> Immortality is what nature possesses without effort and without anybody's assistance, and immortality is what the mortals therefore must try to achieve if they want to live up to the world into which they were born ... The connection between history and nature is therefore by no means an opposition. History receives into its remembrance those mortals who through deed and word have proved themselves worthy of nature, and their everlasting fame means that they, despite their mortality, may remain in the company of the things that last forever.[12]

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., ch. 1, p. 18ff.
2. ibid., p. 23.
3. ibid., p. 27.
4. A. L. Rowse, The Use of History, (Pelican Books, 1971), p. 41.
5. Will Durant, The Story of Civilization: Part II The Life of Greece, (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1966, p. 431.
6. E. H. Carr, What is History? (Pelican Books, 1964), p. 87.
7. H. Arendt, "The Concept of History - Ancient and Modern", in Between Past and Future, (The Viking Press, New York 1969), p. 41.
8. ibid., p. 42.
9. ibid., pp. 42-43.
10. ibid., p. 43.
11. ibid., p. 48.
12. ibid.

(ii) The Hebrews.

Tholfsen says[1] that it is from the Hebrews and their religion that Western culture absorbed a profound interest in the past. He sees the religion of the Hebrews and their historical sense as indissolubly fused. Yahweh "was preeminently a god of history, who made a covenant with his chosen people, delivered them from bondage, presided over their settlement in Canaan, and maintained a continuing interest in their affairs."[2] At every point, he continues, their religion was historically oriented: "... they defined their relationship with Yahweh by recounting a sacred history; their sacred literature took the form of historical narrative."[3]

The Hebrews broke sharply, he says, with the prevailing conceptions of time and history. In the great civilizations of the ancient Near East man's past was "an insignificant element in a vast cosmic whole."[4] Human events were seen to follow regular recurring patterns as man was seen as part of the order of nature like the behaviour of the sun and the seasons.

Instead of recurring events, the Hebrews, claims Tholfsen, saw a series of distinct episodes, each involving a unique intervention by Yahweh, unrepeatable and irreversible. Instead of circular patterns, they saw history moving in a straight line toward the fulfilment of divine purpose. Instead of concerning historical events as subordinate elements in a cosmic order, they saw history as an autonomous realm, of supreme significance to Yahweh. The deity's chief interest was not the world of nature, but the historical world of his chosen people.

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., ch. 2, p. 39.
2. ibid., pp. 39-40.
3. ibid., p. 40.
4. ibid., p. 41.

(iii) Christianity and St. Augustine (354-430)

Tholfsen claims that from Christianity western culture "absorbed an abiding interest in history as an object of the highest religious significance."[1] He quotes the description by Arnaldo Momigliano of the situation that prevailed in the second and third centuries:

> People learnt a new history because they acquired a new religion. Conversion meant literally the discovery of a new history from Adam and Eve to contemporary events ... The convert, in abandoning paganism, was compelled to enlarge his historical horizon: he was likely to think for the first time in terms of universal history.[2]

In the fourth century pagan writers were blaming Christianity for the barbarian invasions and the fall of Rome. To defend Christianity against these charges, St. Augustine wrote The City of God (A.D. 413-426). The result was, says Tholfsen, a statement of Christian philosophy of history that dominated the historical consciousness of medieval Europe.

He says that St. Augustine took the leading ideas implicit in the Hebrew and early Christian conceptions of history and applied them to a broad segment of the past. A sequence of providentially ordained events was depicted. The coming of Christ was presented as the decisive event in the history of mankind. Earlier events took on a new significance as a preparation for the coming of Christ. And events since then were seen to be moving in a straight line toward the new goal revealed in the life of Christ - the salvation of mankind.

The belief in recurring cycles still enjoyed great prestige in the early Christian centuries. Pagan critics, says Tholfsen, argued that Christianity was foolishly attributing absolute importance to a unique event although educated men knew very well that since all events tended to recur, no single event could effect a radical change in human existence. St. Augustine, claims Tholfsen, refused to compromise with the notion that history moves in cycles. He quotes him as saying:

> Of this, too, I have no doubt, that before the first man was created, there never had been a man at all, neither this same man himself recurring by I know not what cycles, and having made I know not how many revolutions, nor any other of similar nature. From this belief I am not frightened by philosophical arguments, ... Even though reason could not refute, faith would smile at these argumentations, with which the godless endeavour to turn our simple piety from the right way, that we may walk with them 'in a circle'. [3]

It is interesting to note that cyclical theories have been revived in modern astronomy. Discussing the problem of the creation of the universe Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield cite the point of view that the "cosmos has neither had an initial Creation, nor displayed an eternal changelessness: instead, it has passed through a recurring cycle of similar changes, oscillating between two extremes, with an overall period of perhaps 100,000 million years".[4] To this point of view, they say, the Big-Bang theory is acceptable. But this view goes back beyond the moment at which the matter of the universe was at its greatest concentration, and denies that the present phase represents the totality, either of time, or of cosmic existence.

> The concentration of galaxies into an exploding 'grenade' some 10,000 million years ago represents only one of two extreme conditions, between which the universe is continually oscillating. The current expansion will go on until it loses all momentum and the cosmos approaches the opposite extreme of maximum rarefaction. Once that extreme has been reached, the process will be reversed, the galaxies will begin to collapse together once more, and eventually they will reform the intensely hot grenade. This will again be unstable and explode ... and so ad infinitum.[5]

Tholfsen sees Western culture as receiving from Christianity a number of ideas and beliefs that were to enter into the development of the modern historical intelligence. The linear view expounded by St. Augustine encouraged, he says, a sequential arrangement of historical phenomena, and spurred inquiry into the connection between one event and another in the sequence. In addition,

Tholfsen sees St. Augustine as fostering the emergence of a progressive interpretation of history in what he terms the "distinctly progressive view"[6] taken by St. Augustine of the spiritual advances that had prepared the way for the triumph of Christianity.

The need for Christianity to define its relationship to Judaism posed, says Tholfsen, the problem of continuity and change. And this problem was thereby brought into the foreground. In handling such a problem it was necessary, he says, to move beyond mere chronicle and grapple with a fundamental problem of historical analysis.

The tendency to envision history as moving in a straight line was conducive to a recognition of the uniqueness of events, whereas, he claims, cyclicalism reduced them to typical elements in a cycle that would recur. The cyclical theory of history found among the Greeks and Romans is seen by Nash also as tending to depreciate history: "If history goes round and round, never getting anywhere, forever repeating itself, there can be no goal either for man as an individual or for the species."[7]

But Nash begs the question concerning justification of the existence of goals for man. It can probably be said, quite safely, that millions of men have lived their lives without the kinds of psychological or philosophical end-points denoted by the term "goals". And whether such goals are an essential part of the Weltanschauung of an individual in a highly sophisticated society is far from a settled question. His point bears out the influence on him of either Christianity or the idea of progress or some philosophy for which the concept of goals is significant.

Tholfsen notes also that the straight line view of history encouraged periodization and the birth of Christ provided one fundamental dividing line.

In his Confessions, St. Augustine focused attention, he says, on the subjective dimension in human

life and held that events are real only in the consciousness of the individual. Implicit in St. Augustine's preoccupation with the subjective, he says, is a new mode of understanding man and his history which seeks to penetrate to the inner life underlying an action, and to recreate ideas, motives and emotions.

A common objection to Augustine's philosophy of history is that he derives it, not from history itself, but rather from the Christian Scriptures. In this regard he is not unlike other speculative philosophers of history who impose their theories on historical data.

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 60.
2. ibid., p. 61.
3. ibid., p. 65.
4. S. Toulmin and J. Goodfield, The Discovery of Time (Pelican Books, 1967), p. 312.
5. ibid., p. 315.
6. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 66.
7. R. H. Nash, ed., Ideas of History (E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1969), Vol. 1, p. 4.

(iv) The Renaissance.

Tholfsen discerns[1] in the Renaissance many new strands that were to be woven into the fabric of modern historical thought. First he sees the development of historical writing as an important and independent literary genre. Secondly, he says, the Renaissance intensified the impulse to write history by assigning to it the highest didactic value as a source of useful examples for moral and political instruction. Thirdly, the creation of a body of scholarship devoted to the study of the writings of antiquity made an invaluable contribution, he says to the technique of historical research. Fourthly, he discerns a "proto-historicist insight into diversity, change and anachronism,"[2] emerging from the humanist experience of a tension between the culture of the Middle Ages and antiquity.

Two other historiographical developments also had their origin in the Renaissance, according to Tholfsen - the publication of source materials and the construction of a critical method for handling them.

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 71.
2. ibid., p. 72.

CHAPTER 2: THE EARLY IMPACT OF SCIENCE AND ITS MODES OF THOUGHT.

(i) Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) and Reaction to Cartesianism.

Nash says that "Vico ... made the first attempt to justify history as an autonomous body of knowledge separate from science."[1] Much of Vico's thinking was in reaction to Descartes and his followers who glorified the mathematical and physical sciences at the expense of history. According to Nash: "Descartes had observed that too much time spent in studying history usurps time that might otherwise be spent on the present. He objected to the general unreliability of historical accounts of the past and to the relative uselessness of history for present-day living."[2]

Vico countered, says Nash, that history was eminently capable of being understood by man. This claim was based on the principle of verum factum: the true and the created are identical. He quotes Robert Flint on what truth and knowledge were for Vico: "The truth is what is known; to be known it must be made; the knowing and the making of truth are inseparable."[3]

The Cartesians, says Nash, "had exhausted their efforts in trying to know the world which they had not made; at the same time they ignored history which man has authored. Since God is the creator of the world, only He can know it with certainty; but since man is the author of history, it follows that history is one thing that man can know."[4]

In Vico's major work Scienza Nuova the two main aims are (1) to discover if there is a universal law of history that governs the past, and (2) to see how this law is reflected in the history of particular peoples. Vico found a pattern in history, a spiral-like movement in which there is both repetition and progress. He distinguished three stages in the development of any period of history - the age of gods, the age of heroes and

the age of men. Corresponding to these three ages there were three types of human nature, three kinds of custom, law and religion.

Nash says that according to Vico, the course of man is a movement from a primitive mentality to a religious way of life and ultimately to an age of reflective rationality. Each period of human history eventually dissolves into a time of decline, decadence and barbarism which makes the beginning of a new cycle possible.

That which makes history move is the providence of God which operates indirectly, realizing its purposes in a natural way. Some critics have pointed out that Vico's position implies a form of pantheism.

Nash quotes Alan Donagan as saying;

> Vico's principle that what men have made, men can hope to know, is the foundation of modern scientific historiography. First, it defines what historians study: namely, whatever survives from past human actions. Secondly, it implicitly specifies their aim: to recover the human thinking, however different from our own it may have been, by which what survives from the past was made.[5]

Another important contribution to historiography, says Nash, was his pointing out of the value of linguistics, mythology, and tradition for a reconstruction of the past.

Hannah Arendt also sees[6] the impact of Cartesian thought as significant for the development of thinking about history and as issuing in thinking in line with Vico's principle of verum factum. She describes as the most fundamental expression of world-alienation ever found, Descartes' rule "de omnibus dubitandum est." Descartes became convinced "that man in his search for truth and knowledge can trust neither the given evidence of the senses, nor the "innate truth" of the mind, nor the inner light of reason."[7] The fundamental experience underlying Cartesian doubt, she says, was the discovery that the earth, contrary to all direct sense experience, revolves around the sun. Man "learned that his senses were not fitted for the universe, that his everyday experience, far from being able to constitute the model for the reception of truth and the acquisition of knowledge, was a constant

source of error and delusion."[8]

Emerging from this predicament Arendt recognises a "positive version of subjectivism"[9] of consequence for our concept of history. "Although it seems that man is unable to recognize the given world which he has not made himself, he nevertheless must be capable of knowing at least what he made himself."[10]

According to Sir Isaiah Berlin,[11] Vico concedes that mathematical knowledge is wholly valid and its propositions are certain. But the reason for this is that they are the creations of our own minds. He emphasized that mathematical knowledge is not identical with knowledge of the real world; not even with knowledge of physics, the science most susceptible to mathematical treatment. For we cannot literally manufacture the physical world, says Berlin, as Vico supposes that we can that of algebra and geometry.

There come, according to Vico, in order of decreasing certainty of knowledge, physics, psychology and history. Certainty increases, Berlin notes, in inverse proportion as the proportion of matter not freely created by us, the "brute" matter of the external world which is merely found by us; the smaller the element of free manipulation imported by ourselves, the less certain our knowledge.

The Cartesian criterion of truth is, says Berlin, that the judgments claiming to be true must be seen to consist of ultimate atomic entities of thought which are not further analysable. These are conceived as being connected with one another by necessary logical links. And what cannot in principle be stated in such terms is defined as less or more delusive.

This would rule out the greater part of our most common experience. "Such knowledge may not be of <u>verum</u> - of what can be logically demonstrated - but it is knowledge nevertheless, of <u>certum</u>, based on direct experience of the world, what is common to all men, everywhere, at all times - on which all empirical knowledge

is based. Such "certainty" may not be incorrigible, but it is what men necessarily live by; to relegate it to the sphere of mere opinion, as Descartes appears to do, is to imply that ideally men could live by true knowledge - verum - alone".[12]

Vico perceives, says Berlin, that if his view of a priori knowledge, that the only objects we can know through and through are those we have wholly created, is correct, then this cannot possibly be so. If the only true knowledge is knowledge of necessary connections the entire world of men and nature is excluded. But as it constitutes the basic data of all human experience we cannot begin to do without it. But it cannot be verum for us. "Only the Creator looking at, or rather "within", himself, that is, at the Universe which is identical with his own self, can be said to have knowledge in this sense. Being author of all, he contemplates only the fruit of his own creative activity."[13]

As men are made in the image of God and are, consequently, creative within limits, they can fully know only what they in turn have made. But they must begin with material not made by themselves, and so not fully knowable by them.

Another thesis proposed by Vico that was of significance for history was his thesis that, in addition to the traditional division of knowledge into three kinds - the metaphysical or theological, the deductive, and the perceptual - there existed a species of self-knowledge. This is "knowledge of activities of which we, the knowing subjects, are ourselves the authors, endowed with motives, purposes and a continuous social life, which we understand, as it were, from inside."[14] This form of knowledge tells us not only what occurs but also "why what is, or occurs, as it is".[15]

In the case of the natural world, says Berlin, we can know what the senses report of what stands in what spatial relation to what, or what follows, or is simultaneous with what. But to say that this is all we can know

about human beings would be, he says, a grave understatement, a denial of what we know to be true. We judge human activity in terms of purposes, decisions, doubts, thoughts, hopes, fears, and so forth and say why people behave in a given fashion. Understanding other men's motives or acts is a state of mind or activity in principle different from learning about the external world. We cannot tell what it is like to be a tree or an ant in the sense that we know what it is like to be a human being.

Berlin says that it was Vico's momentous step to apply the notion of man as an autonomous being, a creator and moulder of himself and the world, not only to the works of man in general such as houses and towns, but "to his history conceived as a collective, social experience extended through time ... as a perpetual "intentional" activity, a ceaseless employment of historically changing conceptions, categories, interpretations, mythical, symbolic, metaphysical, logical, empirical, an endless probing, questioning, ordering and moulding and goal-seeking, which characterize the restless human mind."[16]

Berlin points out that Vico nowhere exactly explains the way in which men understand other men. "He rests his case on his conviction that what men have made, other men, because their minds are those of men, can always, in principle, "enter into"."[17]

References

1. R. H. Nash, op. cit., p. 26.
2. ibid., pp. 26-27.
3. ibid., p. 27.
4. ibid., pp. 27-28.
5. ibid., p. 28.
6. H. Arendt., op. cit., p. 53ff.
7. ibid., p. 54.
8. ibid., p. 55.
9. ibid., p. 56.

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10. ibid., pp. 56-57.
11. I. Berlin, Vico and Herder (The Hogarth Press, London, 1976), Part One. General Theory.
12. ibid., pp. 18-19.
13. ibid., p. 19.
14. ibid., p. 22.
15. ibid.
16. ibid., p. 25.
17. ibid., p. 27.

(ii) The Enlightenment and The Idea of Progress.

The historians of the Enlightenment drew inspiration from science, says Tholfsen[1]. They were not content with mere narrative but were determined to penetrate beneath the surface of events to fundamental patterns and connections. They assumed the orderliness of human behaviour and were confident of their ability to gain coherent and systematic knowledge of the past.

The idea of progress also acted as a powerful leaven in eighteenth-century historical thought. Tholfsen says that it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that doctrinaire formulations of the idea of progress appeared. It was not as a theory but as a cultural conviction, he says, that the idea exerted its influence on eighteenth-century thought.

Didactic motives actuated much of the historiographical activity of the Enlightenment. History could be written to expose the follies of the past and to inculcate truths and values that would enable men to avoid those follies.

The idea of progress reinforced the interest in change, for the "philosophes" had to explain the long series of improvements that had raised man from his primitive beginnings to what was deemed his exalted state. Tholfsen says that in the development of a conception of the historical process the new concept of civilization was utilized and the broadened subject matter associated with it. Historians began to see historical change as the consequence of the interaction between the various forces within a culture.

While advances were made, Tholfsen does see limitation in the Enlightenment outlook. Human nature was conceived of as a relatively fixed entity and this, in his view, made it difficult for the "philosophes" to do justice to the multifarious forms of historical life. The didacticism of the Enlightenment also interfered with a sympathetic understanding of diversity, often leading

to unhistorical extremes. The anti-clerical and anti-religious attitudes of many writers made it virtually impossible for them to understand the Middle Ages. This period was seen to fall short of the enlightened standards of their age and was more often than not caricatured.

Indeed, the very term Middle Ages can be said to have encapsulated in it a pejorative connotation or at least a suggestion of diminished significance in the course of the ages of man delineated by historians.

Tholfsen describes the idea of progress in the Enlightenment as a "double-edged weapon in the historiographical arsenal."[2] While, he says, it stimulated investigation of change through time, it also imposed a crude and superficial conception of the process. Progress was conceived as a negative process, an emancipation from restrictions imposed by the past, from error and superstition. This oversimplified conception was connected, he adds, with the rigid view of human nature characteristic of the period. Given the nature of man, it was considered possible to deduce absolute norms of perfection which were universally valid in all times and places. Progress meant achieving these particular standards.

Tholfsen concludes: "This procrustean attitude was hardly conducive to an understanding of the actual complexity of historical development."[3]

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 94.
2. ibid., p. 100.
3. ibid., p. 101.

(iii) Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

Nash described Kant's essays on the philosophy of history as "typical of the Enlightenment."[1]

For Kant history is teleological and although this cannot be proved he believes that the historian must nonetheless presuppose it. In his Idea of a Universal History he states: "The history of the human race viewed as a whole, may be regarded as the realization of a hidden plan of nature to bring about a political constitution, internally, and for this purpose, also externally perfect as the only state in which all the capacities implanted by her in mankind can be fully developed."[2]

Kant believed that if there is no plan to history, we are no longer justified in believing in providence; and without trust in providence there is no longer any basis for living a moral life.

That which causes history to move, the mechanism, are antagonisms in society. The fourth proposition of his Idea of a Universal History states: "The means which nature employs to bring about the development of all the capacities implanted in men is their mutual antagonism in society, but only so far as this antagonism becomes at length the cause of an order among them that is regulated by law."[3]

Nash says that the major defect seen in Kant's view of history is that he proposed to work out the plan of world history a priori and not by means of historical research.

References

1. R. H. Nash, op. cit., p. 48.
2. ibid., p. 61.
3. ibid., p. 54.

(iv) Condorcet (1743-1794).

Gardiner[1] discerns a reformist passion in Condorcet's view of history as progress towards such goals as universal suffrage and education, freedom of expression and thought, legal equality and the redistribution of wealth. It was in the light of their relevance to fixed ideals and aspirations such as these that historical events were to be judged and appraised.

His view of history as the story of man's gradual emergence from barbarism and superstition is to be contrasted with the view of Herder who saw in history the embodiment of cultural forms and achievements to be understood and respected in themselves.

His ideas on history appear in his Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind. Indicative of the philosophical underpinnings of Condorcet's approach is the passage below:

> The sole foundation for belief in the natural sciences is this idea, that the general laws directing the phenomena of the universe, known or unknown, are necessary and constant. Why should this principle be any less true for the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of man than for the other operations of nature? Since beliefs founded on past experience of like conditions provide the only rule of conduct for the wisest of men, why should the philosopher be forbidden to base his conjectures on these same foundations, so long as he does not attribute to them a certainty superior to that warranted by the number, the constancy, and the accuracy of his observations?[2]

References

1. P. Gardiner, ed., Theories of History (The Free Press, New York, 1959), Part I. Philosophies of History: Vico to Collingwood p. 51.
2. Selections from Condorcet, "Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind", in Gardiner, op. cit., p. 57.

CHAPTER 3: TO MARCH WITH SCIENCE, OR NOT? THE DEBATE INTENSIFIES.

(i) Introduction.

Maurice Mandelbaum sees[1] as the dominant and continuing movements in nineteenth-century philosophy, metaphysical idealism and positivism.

He gives this characterization of metaphysical idealism - "metaphysical idealism holds that within natural human experience one can find the clue to an understanding of the ultimate nature of reality and this clue is revealed through those traits which distinguish man as a spiritual being."[2]

On the other hand: "... positivism rejects metaphysics on the ground that the questions with which metaphysics is concerned presuppose a mistaken belief that we can discover principles of explanation or interpretation which are more ultimate than those which are directly derived from observation and from generalizations concerning observations."[3]

A further distinguishing characteristic of the positivists was the belief that the adequacy of our knowledge increases as it approximates the forms of explanation which have been achieved by the most advanced sciences. The positivist conception of facts was of things, entities lying around waiting to be discovered. This was the basis of the theory of scientific history.

J. B. Bury in 1902 stated: "history is a science, no less and no more."[4] The facts of history were to be gathered like the facts of geology or astronomy. Historical truth was to be attained through the classification and interpretation of facts. Equipped with "historical method" the historian would systematically analyze his sources and banish subjectivity.

Saint-Simon (1760-1825), says Mandelbaum, was an adherent of Newtonianism and he believed that man was a machine, like all other parts of nature: "a mechanistic microcosm within the great mechanical macrocosm."[5]

He insisted that there must be laws controlling the direction of human development. Mandelbaum sees his form of "necessitarianism" as standing in close relation to historicism.

Comte (1798-1857), says[6] Mandelbaum, accepted the view that a proper evaluation of any institution or doctrine consists in seeing its necessity at a given time.

Comte says[7] that each branch of our knowledge passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological or fictitious; the metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive. In the theological state, the human mind supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. In the metaphysical state the mind supposes abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena.

> In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after Absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws - that is their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge. What is now understood when we speak of an explanation of facts is simply the establishment of a connection between single phenomena and some general facts, the number of which continually diminishes with the progress of science. [8]

Comte sees the four principal categories of phenomena, the astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological as having reached the positivist stage of understanding. Social phenomena form the missing category.

References

1. M. Mandelbaum, History, Man and Reason - A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought (The Johns Hopkins Press 1971), p. 6.
2. ibid.

References: (cont'd)

3. ibid., p. 10.
4. J. B. Bury, "The Science of History" in F. Stern, ed., The Varieties of History (Macmillan 1970) p. 210.
5. M. Mandelbaum, op. cit., p. 63.
6. M. Mandelbaum, op. cit., p. 65.
7. H. Martineau, Trans., "The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte", Ch. 1 in Nash, op. cit., p. 8.
8. ibid., p. 9.

(ii) Historicism.

Prominent in nineteenth century historiography were the concepts and approaches to historical material encompassed by the term "historicism." Mandelbaum defined it thus - "Historicism is the belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering it in terms of the place which it occupied and the role which it played within a process of development."[1]

This thesis rejects the view that historical events have an individual character which can be grasped apart from viewing them as embedded within a pattern of development. This position is not to be identified, insists Mandelbaum, with the so called "historical sense" or capacity to view past events free of the prejudices of the present and in terms of conditions under which they actually occurred.

He examines the philosophic assumptions usually associated with the use of the concept of development. He notes that whenever we speak of a development we must always have in mind the idea of something which develops.

"... the comprehension of any 'genuine' development must be more than a matter of tracing a succession of changes; ... on the contrary the historian is concerned with a developmental process in which some subject manifests itself in successive forms, each of these forms expressing a tendency which is characteristic of the whole."[2]

Mandelbaum identifies two sources of the fundamental aspect of historicism, that the category of development provided the basic means of understanding reality and human history. One source, he says, can be identified with the Romantic rebellion against the Enlightenment and is characterized by the tendency to view historical development on the analogy of the growth of living things. The other source was a continuation of the Enlightenment tradition of seeking to establish laws

of development. Those who continued this tradition, says Mandelbaum, differed from some of their predecessors in that they "assumed that the laws which would serve to explain social organization and change were not to be derived from a consideration of the psychological dispositions of men, but referred directly to the course of history."[3] Further, they believed that such laws defined the direction in which change necessarily proceeds.

The assumption, says Mandelbaum, that there are laws which control the direction of historical change, leads directly to historicism. For any event to be "significant" and not merely "accidental" it would have to be an ... "exemplification of the overriding forces inherent in the developmental law."[4]

As mentioned above,[5] writers on history have found the term "historicism" troublesome in view of the differing conceptions and shifting emphases encompassed by it.

Berlin refers to historicism as "a doctrine that in its empirical form has stimulated and enriched, and in its dogmatic, metaphysical form, inhibited and distorted, the historical imagination."[6] And when commenting on historicism as found in Vico's writings, he defined it as: "belief in the unique character and indispensability, and above all, validity at its own stage of development, of each of the phases through which mankind has passed and will pass; belief in an immaterial soul, with its own immanent laws of growth, modified by external factors but not subject to mechanical causation; belief that men understand themselves and their own works in a different, and superior, sense to that in which they know the external world; the view that history is a humane study in some sense in which physics is not; finally, that the goals of men are set by Providence, and that their past and future are strictly governed by it ..."[7]

Mandelbaum's emphasis on the "process" or

"pattern of development" and the idea of "something" which develops would appear to be somewhat in conflict with the idea of the "uniqueness" of the "phases" through which "mankind passes". There is discernible in Mandelbaum's definition a hint of the determinism condemned by Popper.[8] Berlin's reference to the goals of men as being "set by Providence" bears some similarity to Maritain's[9] Christian conception of man's freedom within a framework, the direction of which is determined.

References

1. M. Mandelbaum, op. cit., p. 42.
2. ibid., p. 47.
3. ibid., p. 48.
4. ibid., p. 49.
5. see page 3.
6. I. Berlin, Vico and Herder (The Hogarth Press, London, 1976), p. 36.
7. ibid., p. 72.
8. See pages 73-74 below.
9. See pages 72-73 below.

(iii) Herder (1744-1803).

Herder is widely regarded as typifying and giving the greatest impetus to the "Romantic rebellion against the Enlightenment" and his writings laid the ground work for the "historicist" theses.

Tholfsen says[1] Herder saw the view of the "philosophes" of the past as monochromatic and static and out of touch with the diversity and flux of human life. Herder insisted that the historian concentrate on unique historical forms and not judge the past by the standards of his own age. He should strive for an empathetic understanding of every epoch.

Herder was influenced by the metaphysical system of Leibniz and by Pietism. Leibniz's universe was composed of monads, "immaterial substances, forces without extension."[2] Each monad was qualitatively different from every other and was in a state of constant development. Tholfsen sees the Pietistic awareness of the uniqueness of every human soul as fostering in Herder a sense of the individuality of historical forms.

Tholfsen cites Herder as stating in 1774 that in the world "no two moments are the same"[3] and sees this affirmation as signifying the break with the fundamental assumptions of Enlightenment historiography.

Herder denounced, says Tholfsen, the absurdity of any attempt to depict the quintessence of all times and peoples. Noting how difficult it is to understand the individual human being, he was scornful of attempts to portray mankind in general. In contrast with Enlightenment attempts to explain historical phenomena as expressions of the unchanging characteristics of man in general, Herder emphasized the plasticity of human nature and the formative power of historical circumstances. No arbitrary faith in the uniformity of human nature should be permitted, he believed, to obscure the uniqueness of a people.

Herder, says Tholfsen, possessed an acute sense of the distinctive characteristics of the various historical

periods. He rebuked the "philosophes" for measuring periods against absolute standards or those of the writer's own age and condemning or praising accordingly. Every phenomenon must be understood in its own terms.

Tholfsen sees underlying Herder's sense of individuality a new conception of man and the subject matter of history. "Man must be understood not primarily in terms of reason, but as a totality of diverse elements, embracing the will and the feelings as well as reason. Events are but the outer expression of the inner life of the soul, and the historian must penetrate to that inner reality."[4]

The methodological implications of this view of the subject matter of history are that the past as a spiritual reality cannot be understood through the methods of the natural sciences. Reason by itself is insufficient. The spiritual reality of the past must be felt; it cannot be known through abstraction. Herder coined a new word, says Tholfsen, to describe the new mode of understanding that was necessary to understand the history of the human soul - "Einfühlung". (This may be translated as the process of feeling one's way into the spirit of an age or the mind of an historical figure).

Auch eine Philosophie (1774) contains, says Berlin, the most eloquent description of the newly discovered sense of history -

> How unspeakably difficult it is to convey the particular quality [Eigenheit] of an individual human being and how impossible it is to say precisely what distinguishes an individual, his way of feeling and living; how different and how individual [anders und eigen] everything becomes once his eyes see it, once his soul grasps, his heart feels, it. How much depth there is in the character of a single people, which, no matter how often observed ... nevertheless escapes the word which attempts to catch it, and, even with the word to catch it, is seldom so recognizable as to be universally understood and felt. If this is so, what happens when one tries to master an entire ocean of peoples, times, cultures, countries, with one glance, one sentiment, by means of one single word! Words, pale shadow-play! An entire living picture of ways of life, or habits,

> wants, characteristics of land and sky, must be added, or provided in advance; one must start by feeling sympathy with a nation if one is to feel a single one of its inclinations or acts, or all of them together. [5]

An important element of Herder's view of the past was the idea of development. He saw new historical forms constantly emerging out of the old. He had, says Tholfsen, a profound sense of the continuity between one period and another which was obscured by the Enlightenment's conception of progress. For example, the "philosophes" saw in the Middle Ages obstacles that had to be overcome before enlightenment could be achieved and depicted the relationship between the thirteenth century and their own age in negative terms. Herder, on the other hand, saw the Middle Ages as constituting a necessary prerequisite to the subsequent development of Western civilization. He saw a steady continuity between the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment.

By way of a summary of his historicist view of the past Tholfsen quotes Herder as saying: "I cannot persuade myself that anything in the whole kingdom of God is merely a means; all is at once means and end - and that is certainly true of this period." [The Middle Ages.] [6]

For Herder, Tholfsen points out further, the continuity of history constituted another objection to the practice of making invidious comparisons between one period and another. It is pointless to praise the Enlightenment at the expense of earlier epochs each of which was a prerequisite to what came later.

Although Herder disagreed with the Enlightenment idea of progress, he did see progress in history. To him it was "an overall upward movement, in which each succeeding age made advances by utilizing the legacy it had inherited." [7]

To extend one's own ideal of virtue and happiness to distant nations or remote ages in history was a dangerous delusion and based on a misconception of what progress is. As Berlin interprets Herder's thought, it lies in a

variety of cultures, incommensurable with each other and incapable of being arranged on some single scale of progress or retrogression. What Herder calls "Fortgang" (advance) is, Berlin says, the internal development of a culture in its own habitat towards its own goals, the development of human beings as integrated wholes ... "as groups - tribes, cultures, and communities determined by language and custom, creating out of the "totality of their collective experience," and expressing themselves in works of art ... and in sciences and crafts and forms of social and political and cultural life that fulfil the cravings (conscious and unconscious) and develop the faculties of a given society, in its interplay with its alterable, ... natural environment."[8]

He quotes Herder as saying: "Each age is different, and each has the centre of its happiness within itself. The youth is not happier than the innocent, contented child; nor is the peaceful old man less happy than the vigorous man in the prime of life."[9]

Berlin describes[10] as the most revolutionary of the implications of Herder's ideas his pluralism, his rejection of absolute values. If Herder's notion of the equal validity of incommensurable cultures is accepted, he says, the concepts of an ideal state or of an ideal man become incoherent. A theme to which he constantly returned is that one must not judge one culture by the criteria of another. Differing civilizations are different growths, pursue different goals, embody different ways of living and are dominated by different attitudes to life. To understand them one must perform an imaginative act of empathy into their essence. Such questions as which of them is best, Berlin points out, or which one would judge to be nearer to the universal human ideal, are meaningless. Since there is no common standard in terms of which to grade them, there can be no final solution to the problem of what men as such should aim at.

If it is the case that the notion of the perfect civilization in which the ideal human being realizes his

full potentialities is patently absurd, then, Berlin concludes, Herder's pluralism "is perhaps the sharpest blow ever delivered against the classical philosophy of the West, to which the notion of perfection - the possibility, at least in principle, of universal, timeless solutions of problems of value - is essential."[11]

Mandelbaum assigns an important role to the conception of "divine immanence" in the world which he sees propounded by Herder. This conception fostered, he claims, an acceptance of the presuppositions basic to historicism.

> So far as understanding the nature of anything was concerned, the doctrine of divine immanence made it imperative that one should consider all phenomena as being internally related ... related in essence, since all were manifestations of one Divine Being. It therefore also led to the view that there were two ways of knowing that which was contained within the historical process: an outer, superficial mode, and a mode by means of which man could penetrate into the hidden inner springs of power from which all things followed.[12]

With Hegel, says Mandelbaum, historicism is made the foundation of a complete view of the world and is no longer just a "corollary of the doctrine of divine immanence."[13]

He claims that Hegel's predecessors had believed that by an "empathic act" one could understand individual cultures and appreciate their natures by grasping them as individual manifestations of the Divine. But Hegel insisted, he says, that one must not only view them in their relations to the Absolute, but in their relations to one another as logically sequential manifestations of the Absolute.

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 127.
2. ibid., p. 131.
3. ibid., p. 132.
4. ibid., p. 136.
5. I. Berlin, Vico and Herder (The Hogarth Press, London, 1976) pp.187-188.

References: (cont'd)

6. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 138.
7. ibid., p. 139.
8. I. Berlin, op. cit., p. 191.
9. ibid.
10. ibid., p. 206.
11. ibid., p. 212.
12. M. Mandelbaum, op. cit., p. 59.
13. ibid.

(iv) Henry Thomas Buckle: (1821-1862).

Gardiner says[1] that Buckle had been profoundly impressed by Comte's demand that society should be studied through the application of scientific procedures and that for Buckle this meant the discovery by inductive inquiry, of causal uniformities governing social life and development. He says that in his discussion of the sources of the resistance to the scientific study of history Buckle lays the blame on two "dogmas" - the dogma of "Free Will" and the dogma of "Predestination". These have inhibited men from undertaking an examination of history in a scientific spirit.

Buckle claims that the failure of historians to reduce facts to order and to discover the regularity in the midst of confusion that was a familiar expectation of scientific man could be ascribed partly to "their being of inferior ability to the investigators of nature and partly to the greater complexity of those social phenomena with which their studies are concerned."[2]

He supposed that when man lived by hunting he might well have considered that the appearance of food was the result of some accident which admitted of no explanation. In the case of agricultural man there arose through the experience of planting and eventual harvesting the idea of the stability of events and the expectation of certain uniformities. The generalization of observations led to the belief that every event is linked to its antecedent by an inevitable connection, that such antecedent is connected with a preceding fact and that thus the whole world forms a necessary chain.

"Thus it is that, in the ordinary march of society, an increasing perception of the regularity of nature destroys the doctrine of chance and replaces it by that of Necessary Connection. And it is, I think, highly probable that out of these two doctrines of chance and necessity there have respectively arisen the subsequent dogmas of Free Will and Predestination ..."[3]

The latter, founded on a theological hypothesis ... "must, in a scientific investigation, be regarded as

a barren hypothesis, because, being beyond the province of our knowledge we have no means of ascertaining either its truth or its falsehood."[4]

The former rests on the metaphysical dogma of the supremacy of human consciousness and the consciousness of possessing a free will. But as in different ages there were different standards of truth, it is clear, Buckle holds, that the testimony of a man's consciousness is no proof of an opinion being true.

He rejects the dogmas of free will and of predestined events and asks the believer in the possibility of a science of history to concede "that when we perform an action, we perform it in consequence of some motive or motives; that those motives are the results of some antecedents; and that, therefore, if we were acquainted with the whole of the antecedents, and with all the laws of their movements, we could with unerring certainty predict the whole of their immediate results."[5]

He concludes: "... that the actions of men being determined solely by their antecedents must have a character of uniformity, that is to say, must, under precisely the same circumstances, always issue in precisely the same results. And as all antecedents are either in the mind or out of it, we clearly see that all the variations in the results, in other words, all the changes of which history is full, all the vicissitudes of the human race, their progress or their decay ... must be the fruit of a double action; an action of external phenomena upon the mind, and another action of the mind upon the phenomena ..."[6]

The physical agents by which the human race is most powerfully influenced can be classed under the heads of Climate, Food, Soil and the General Aspect of Nature. The latter through the medium of the senses has directed the association of ideas and given rise to different habits of national thought. He claims that an examination of the history of the world would show that "the tendency has been, in Europe, to subordinate nature to man; out of Europe, to subordinate man to nature."[7]

> The great division, therefore, between European civilization and non-European civilization, is the basis of the philosophy of history since it suggests the important consideration that if we would understand, for instance, the history of India, we must make the external world our first study, because it has influenced man more than man has influenced it. If on the other hand we would understand the history of a country like France or England, we must make man our principal study, because nature being comparatively weak, every step in the great progress has increased the dominion of the human mind over the agencies of the external world. [8]

References

1. P. Gardiner, ed., op. cit., p. 105
2. H. T. Buckle, "History and the operation of universal laws" in P. Gardiner, ed., op. cit., p. 110.
3. ibid., p. 112.
4. ibid.
5. ibid., p. 114.
6. ibid.
7. ibid., p. 120.
8. ibid., pp 120-121.

(v) Fustel de Coulanges (1830-1889).

Tholfsen says[1] that Fustel de Coulanges took science as his guiding ideal. "History is and should be a science,"[2] he quotes him as declaring. To be "scientific," however, did not mean searching for the laws of history. It meant following the new standards of critical scholarship. By a science of history he meant, says Tholfsen, "a disciplined and systematic approach that would do justice to man as he is, not to man conceived by analogy to the rest of nature."[3]

He claims that it was this sense of man as he actually is which saved Fustel from the errors of positivism. He emphasized diversity and change as the salient characteristics of the past and rejected any rigid conception of human nature as fixed and in terms of which historical phenomena could be explained.

Fustel made plain the methodological implications of the changeableness of human nature:

> The science which studies man cannot therefore apply the same operations as does botany or physiology. The botanist takes a plant, and when he has carefully observed it he is sure to see it the same as it always has been; ... But man is not today what he was three thousand years ago; he does not think what he thought then, he does not live as he then lived. Therefore, to know fully that variable and perfectible being one must study it in all the stages of its existence; other beings can be studied by simple observations; man can be known only through history.[4]

Tholfsen points out that while Fustel denied that man has a fixed nature, this was to emphasize that variability was man's most conspicuous characterstic. He was not arguing that men have no characteristics in common. Like every historian he had a distinct conception of "human nature" which appears both explicitly and implicitly in his work.

Tholfsen says that Fustel steered clear of the major weakness of the positivist position - the tendency to single out those features which history shares with the natural sciences and to identify these as the essence

of "the historical method." Fustel saw history as a different science. Crucial in this difference was the matter of diversity. He noted, Tholfsen says, that science is based on the analysis of regularities and uniformities. Yet this kind of analysis must be resisted in history. What must be grasped are just those qualities which distinguish an epoch in the past from our own. "The ability to grasp diversity, so foreign to reason and science, is precisely the 'tour particulier d'esprit' which makes the historian."[5]

Another extreme version of the positivist theory of history was that the primary task of "the historical method" was the accurate determination of facts, which, once determined, fit automatically into the structure of knowledge. Fustel protested against this view, says Tholfsen, and emphasized the interconnectedness of facts. Tholfsen quotes him as saying: "History is composed of a multitude of small facts;but the little fact, in itself, is not history."[6]

According to Tholfsen, Fustel felt that fear of the excesses of generalization had led to the opposite excess - a rejection of every attempt to view the totality. Fustel stated: "History proceeds by detail, but it is not limited to detail. To erect into an absolute rule that it must forbid itself research into general laws is to go against the true aim of science."[7] Tholfsen points out that the context makes clear that by "general laws" Fustel did not have in mind scientific laws, but connections between facts.

References

1. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 195.
2. ibid., p. 195.
3. ibid., p. 201.
4. Fustel de Coulanges, "The Ethos of a Scientific Historian", in Stern, Varieties of History (Macmillan, 1970), p. 180-181.
5. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 206.
6. ibid.
7. ibid., p. 207.

(vi) Marx (1818-1883) and Engels (1820-1895).

The writings of Marx and Engels exemplify many aspects of the historicist thesis, and, many would claim, the thesis that history can be written in a scientific way.

Engels and Marx propounded in their writings their belief in the existence of an inexorable law of development embracing all of human history. In Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy Engels makes perfectly explicit his acceptance of what Mandelbaum calls the "evaluative thesis of historicism".

"... all successive historical systems are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher. Each stage is necessary, and therefore justified for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin. But in the face of new, higher conditions, which gradually develop in its own womb, it loses its validity and justification. It must give way to a higher stage, which will also in its turn decay and perish."[1]

In a penetrating analysis[2] of the writings of Marx and Engels, Bertrand Russell separates clearly the Marxist metaphysic (of dialectical materialism) from the historical thesis (the economic interpretation of history), evidence in verification of which may be sought in scientific fashion (according to some conceptions of "scientific"). Likewise, evidence can be found contrary to his thesis and in support of alternative theses.

His metaphysic is, however, as much tainted by a priorism as other metaphysical systems and, as little susceptible of scientific verification. The materialism of dialectical materialism, as far as human affairs are concerned, is translated, says Russell, into the doctrine that the prime cause of all social phenomena is the method of production and exchange prevailing at any given period.

> ... it was seen that all past history, with the exception of its primitive stages, was the history of class struggle; that these warring classes of society are always the products of the modes of

> production and of exchange - in a word, of the economic conditions of their time; that the economic structure of society always furnishes the real basis, starting from which we can alone work out the ultimate explanation of the whole superstructure of juridical and political institutions as well as of the religious, philosophical and other ideas of a given historical period.[3]

Russell sees similarity between Marx's materialism and Dewey's pragmatism or instrumentalism. He says that, in opposition to the Greek tradition that knowledge is obtained by means of passive contemplation, Marx maintains that we are always active; we are never merely apprehending our environment but always at the same time altering it. This is why the test of all truth is practical. Further, since the object is changed when it is acted upon, truth ceases to be static and becomes something which is continually changing and developing. Russell says that this is why Marx calls his materialism "dialectical", because it contains within itself, like Hegel's dialectic, an essential principle of progressive change.

Russell states that materialism may, in some sense, be true though it cannot be known to be so. The propositions of materialism belong to the realm of metaphysics and are, consequently, not susceptible of empirical verification. In the introduction to An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth he outlines[4] briefly the question of the relation between truth and knowledge. He says that attempts have been made to define "truth" in terms of "knowledge", or of concepts, such as "verifiability", which involve "knowledge". These attempts, if carried out logically lead, he says, to paradoxes which there is no reason to accept. He concludes that "truth" is the fundamental concept, and that "knowledge" must be defined in terms of "truth", not vice versa. This entails the consequences that a proposition may be true although no way is seen of obtaining evidence either for or against it.

Concerning the dialectic in history, Russell points out that for Hegel the historical development of the world in time was merely an objectification of the

dialectical process of thought. He says that this view appeared possible to Hegel because for him mind was the ultimate reality, while for Marx, on the contrary, matter is the ultimate reality. Nevertheless, Russell continues, Marx believed the world developed according to a logical formula.

When discussing the causes of social changes and the seeking of these in changes in the modes of production and exchange Engels says that "the means of getting rid of the incongruities that have been brought to light [in the social order] must also be present in a more or less developed condition, within the changed modes of production themselves."[5] Russell describes the "must" as betraying a relic of the Hegelian belief that logic rules the world and claims that in innumerable instances the outcome of a conflict in politics is not the establishment of some more developed economic system. Russell holds that: "... the elements of dialectic which Marx took over from Hegel made him regard history as a more rational process than it has in fact been, convincing him that all changes must be in some sense progressive, and giving him a feeling of certainty in regard to the future, for which there is no scientific warrant."[6]

According to Russell the truth or falsity of Marx's theory of economic development has nothing to do with the truth or falsity of his metaphysic. "Whenever metaphysics is really useful in reaching a conclusion, that is because the conclusion cannot be reached by scientific means, i. e. because there is no good reason to suppose it true. What can be known, can be known without metaphysics, and whatever needs metaphysics for its proof cannot be proved."[7]

He suggested that a metaphysic may be helpful in a battle: "early Mohammedan conquests were much facilitated by the belief that the faithful who died in battle went straight to Paradise, and similarly the efforts of Communists may be stimulated by the belief that there is a God called Dialectical Materialism who is fighting on their side, and will, in His own good time, give them the victory."[8] But, while metaphysics may be helpful in

the "battle" to make Communism universal, the questions whether it has become, or is likely to become, universal are empirical questions to be settled by adducing appropriate verifiable evidence and not by an appeal to metaphysics.

With regard to Marx's historical thesis, his economic interpretation of history, Russell accepts it as very largely true, but makes some important qualifications. He claims firstly, that Marx does not allow enough for the time-lag. He concedes that new doctrines in politics, art and morals that have any success must bear some relation to the economic circumstances of their age, but old doctrines can persist for many centuries without any such relation of any vital kind.

Further, he thinks that Marx's theory of history is too definite in that he does not allow for the fact that a small force may tip the balance when two great forces are in approximate equilibrium. Admitting, he says, that the great forces are generated by economic causes, it often depends upon quite trivial and fortuitous events which of the great forces gets the victory. He cites the case of the German government allowing Lenin to get to Russia. If the Minister concerned had happened to have dyspepsia on the morning of the decision he might have said "no". Russell does not think that it can be rationally maintained that without Lenin the Russian Revolution would have achieved what it did.

Marx regards economic conflicts as always between classes, whereas, Russell points out, the majority of them have been between races or nations. Another set of causes which may be called medical are not without considerable importance in history, e.g. The Black Death.

But the most necessary correction in Marx's theory, according to Russell, concerns the causes of changes in methods of production. For Marx methods of production are prime causes but the reasons for which they change are left unexplained. Russell claims that they change, in the main, owing to intellectual causes, that is to say, owing to scientific discoveries and inventions.

It was the growth of science after the Renaissance, he says, that led to modern industry. This intellectual causation of economic processes is not adequately recognized by Marx he says.

References.

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3. Friedrich Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" in ed. Lewis S. Feuer, op. cit., p. 129.
4. B. Russell, An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth (Penguin Books), 1973), p. 19.
5. Friedrich Engels, op. cit., p. 131.
6. B. Russell, "Dialectical Materialism" in P. Gardiner, ed., op. cit., p. 288.
7. ibid., p. 293.
8. ibid.

(vii) Historicism appraised.

If history is a science, it would appear, if Mandelbaum's appraisal of historicism is correct, that it is not a science founded upon a single all embracing developmental law under which all historical events may be subsumed.

Despite the spectacular growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of empirical historiography Mandelbaum notes[1] the persistence of the assumption that there had been one single dominant line of development in human history. To explain the persistence of this assumption he takes into account what he describes as the prevalent human error of "retrospective fallacy". This fallacy, he says, "consists in looking at a series of events in terms of its ultimate outcome interpreting each of the earlier events with reference to that outcome".[2]

If, however, we examine, he says, each of these events as it was related to the occasion of its occurrence rather than looking at the events in terms of that in which the series eventuated, the series will present an entirely different aspect. At each step in the series, alternative possibilities may be seen to have been open. The retrospective fallacy is a fallacy, he says, "because it rests on the fact that, when we have learned the actual outcome of a series of events, we tend to forget that other conclusions might have been possible: we ascribe a privileged position to that outcome and we view all earlier events as if they had been controlled by it."[3]

He points out that the acceptance of determinism in history is characteristic of those who adopt a purely retrospective point of view and it does not depend on an inappropriate application of scientifically oriented forms of explanation to human actions. He asserts that the proper interpretation of deliberation and choice in human history is obscured if we look upon the past solely in terms of what did eventuate, without tracing each step in the series of events as it happened, seeking out what possibilities had originally been present.

He concludes that, if his view of the retrospective

fallacy is true, the explanatory thesis of historicism is without justification. "Once one recognizes the difference between tracing the connections of a series of historical events in the order in which they developed, and viewing them retrospectively only, it is not possible to regard long-term changes as providing a basis on which to understand the specific events which occurred: the whole with respect to which these specific events are supposedly to be interpreted actually exists only because of the successive parts which it is alleged to explain."[4]

Mandelbaum claims that if his arguments above are correct, the foundations which the evaluative thesis of historicism presupposes are removed. The evaluative thesis "asserts that an evaluation of any phenomenon demands that we view it in relation to what it contributed, or failed to contribute, to the larger processes of development of which it was a part."[5] Events are not judged he says, in terms of what, at the time, were the actual alternatives, or what actions other than those taken might have been preferred to them.

> ... the retrospective point of view actually leads to a form of anachronism: it leads us to look at actions and at institutions, not in terms of their own contexts, but in relation to what they inherited from the past and what they bequeathed to the future. Consequently, our evaluations of them are not, strictly speaking, evaluations of them; these evaluations derive from our attitude toward that process in which we see them as embedded.[6]

References

1. Mandelbaum, op. cit., p. 134.
2. ibid.
3. ibid., pp. 134-135.
4. ibid., p. 136.
5. ibid.
6. ibid., p. 137.

CHAPTER 4: THE IDEALISTS.

(i) Introduction.

As characterized by Mandelbaum (in ch. 3), the idealist is marked by his belief that an understanding of the ultimate nature of reality can be obtained through those traits which distinguish man as a spiritual being.

The idealists claim that explanation in history is quite different from explanation in the natural sciences. Nash says[1] that Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936), influenced by Kant's noumena-phenomena distinction and by Hegel's distinction between Nature and Spirit, maintained that there were two kinds of science, the natural sciences (Naturwissenschaften) and the human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften). The natural sciences approach their subject matter from "the outside"; they describe regularities in nature through the observation of natural phenomena. In the human sciences, however, the subject matter is accessible to the social scientist in a way not possible for the natural scientist. For example, because the historian is a man studying the actions of other men, he can know their actions from "the inside", as it were.

A further distinction between the natural and human sciences is that while the natural scientist searches for regularities in nature and for generalizations that he can make about these regularities, the historian studies something unique, individual and unrepeatable.

References

1. R. H. Nash, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 5.

(ii) Hegel.[1]

Hegel takes it as demonstrated by logic that reason is at work in history. The philosophical historian's task is to apply the principle showing that an account of the facts can be given consistently with it. The results of empirical history are data to be illuminated by bringing the knowledge of the Idea, the formal articulation of reason, to bear upon it and to elevate empirical contents to the rank of necessary truth.

In Hegel's view the clue to history is to be found in the idea of freedom. This principle, he claimed, was capable of both abstract logical proof and of empirical confirmation as a glance at the course of historical events would show. In the old civilizations of China, Babylonia and Egypt slavery was the rule. Only the monarch had freedom. The Greco-Roman world extended the area of freedom. The process was completed by the Germanic nations of modern Europe, who accepted the Christian principle of the infinite worth of individual men as such, and so have explicitly adopted the idea of liberty.

He believed philosophical history must concern itself with a larger unit than individual men - the nation and each nation has its hour of destiny as the chosen vehicle of the world spirit. There were four main stages of the historical process - Oriental, Greek, Russian and Germanic.

Hegel contended that for reason's design to be carried out the actions of great men were needed who would be the chosen instruments of destiny. Ideas are impotent until will-power stands behind them. The actions of these great men were not to be judged by ordinary moral standards.

In criticism of Hegel, Walsh says that professional historians regard as imprudent, attempts to seek intelligibility by imposing a preconceived pattern on the actual course of events. It is to be sought rather by the colligating of events in the historical process by means of appropriate conceptions, by the tracing of the working of general laws of psychology, sociology or common sense. The historical process will be explained when the

historian thinks himself in a position to construct what he calls a significant narrative of the events in question.

Hegel lays himself open to the charge of a priorism which he sought to repudiate. He says history must be the gradual realization of freedom and this process must complete itself in four distinct stages. If this is not determining the course of history apart from experience, says Walsh, it is hard to know what is.

One of the most trenchant critics of Hegel has been Sir Karl Popper who avows his inability to see any greatness in Hegel and condemns his philosophy of history as historicism, to believe in which, he says, "reveals neither historical understanding nor historical sense."[2] He maintains that he has found that historians tend to value Hegel as a philosopher and that philosophers tend to believe that his contributions, if any, he adds parenthetically, were to the understanding of history!

One of Popper's main objections to historicist metaphysics is that they are apt to relieve men from the strain of their responsibilities. "If you know that things are bound to happen whatever you do, then you may feel free to give up the fight against them. You may, more especially, give up the attempt to control those things which most people agree to be social evils, such as war ..."[3] He sees nearly all the more important ideas of modern totalitarianism as directly inherited from Hegel. He cites "nationalism, in the form of the historicist idea that the state is the incarnation of the Spirit ... of the state-creating nation (or race); one chosen nation ... is destined for world domination;"[4] "the state is exempt from any kind of moral obligation; history, that is, historical success, is the sole judge; collective utility is the sole principle of personal conduct; propagandist lying and distortion of the truth is permissible;"[5] "the creative role of the Great Man, the world-historical personality, the man of deep knowledge and great passion (now, the principle of leadership)."[6]

Isaiah Berlin sees[7] as unacceptable to the serious historian the idea of one unique historical scheme as being the truth and into which alone all facts will be found to fit. Historians must keep distinct, he says, the level of facts on the one hand, from the level of theories and cosmic patterns whether empirical, metaphysical or theological. He eschews as invalid the attempt "to shuffle off responsibility, which, at an empirical level, seems to rest upon this or that historical individual or society ... on to some metaphysical machinery ..."[8] Like Popper, he objects to the impersonality of "metaphysical machinery" which excludes the very idea of moral responsibility.

References

1. The main source for the outline of Hegel's philosophy of history is: W. H. Walsh, An Introduction to Philosophy of History (Hutchinson & Co. London, 1970) ch. 7, p. 134 ff.
2. K. R. Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies Volume 2, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973), p. 59.
3. K. R. Popper, op. cit., Volume 1, p. 4.
4. K. R. Popper, op. cit., Volume 2, p. 62.
5. ibid., p. 63.
6. ibid.
7. Isaiah Berlin, "Historical Inevitability" in Four Essays on Liberty (Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 107.
8. ibid., p. 108.

(iii) R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943).

Collingwood believed that history is properly concerned with human thoughts and experiences. An historical event could be known because the act of thought behind the event was intrinsically capable of revival and rethought by the historian.

For him the historian's approach to his subject matter was fundamentally different from the scientist's approach to nature. Collingwood says[1] that the evolutionary conception of nature might seem at first sight to have abolished the difference between natural process and historical process, and to have resolved nature into history. But the techniques of the historian are inapplicable to the study of natural processes.

> There is a certain analogy between the archaeologist's interpretation of a stratified site and the geologist's interpretation of rock horizons with their associated fossils; but the difference is no less clear than the similarity. The archaeologist's use of his stratified relics depends on his conceiving them as artifacts serving human purposes and thus expressing a particular way in which men have thought about their own life, and from his point of view the palaeontologist arranging his fossils in a time series, is not working as a historian, but only as a scientist thinking in a way which can at most be described as quasi-historical. [2]

Collingwood says that it is not enough just to consider the characteristics of method. What must be asked is the general nature of the problems which the method is designed to solve. When this is done, he says, it appears that the special problem of the historian is one which does not arise in the case of natural science. "The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event."[3]

By the outside of an event he means "... everything belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements."[4] By the inside of an event he means ... "that in it which can only be described in terms of thought."[5] The historian's work may begin by

discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there. He must always remember, Collingwood says, that the event was an action and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent.

In the case of nature, he says, this distinction between the outside and the inside of an event does not arise. The scientist goes beyond the event to observe its relation to others and thus bring it under a general formula or law of nature. The event is not conceived of as an action with a thought of an agent which can be discovered.

> To the scientist, nature is always and merely a 'phenomenon', not in the sense of being defective in reality, but in the sense of being a spectacle presented to his intelligent observation; whereas the events of history are never mere phenomena, never mere spectacles for contemplation, but things which the historian looks not at, but through, to discern the thought within.[6]

The historian need not, he says, and cannot (without ceasing to be a historian) emulate the scientist in searching for the causes, or laws of events. When the historian has discovered the thought expressed in an event, he understands it. "When he knows what happened, he already knows why it happened."[7]

> The processes of nature can ... be properly described as sequences of mere events, but those of history cannot. They are not processes of mere events but processes of actions, which have an inner side, consisting of processes of thought; and what the historian is looking for is these processes of thought. All history is the history of thought.[8]

The idea of natural process cannot be identified with that of historical process. Collingwood deprecates as the result of confused thinking and a source of further confusions the use of the word "evolution" in historical context such as in talk of the "evolution of parliament". He sees the use of such terms as a consequence of the tendency to regard the science of nature as the only true form of knowledge and of the desire of other forms of knowledge to assimilate themselves to the scientific model.

The idealist in Collingwood emerges quite clearly in his conception of history as knowledge of mind. History is not a story of successive events or an account of change. The historian is concerned with events only insofar as they reveal to him the thoughts of which he is in search.

> Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the same time it is the redoing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present. Its object is therefore not a mere object, something outside the mind which knows it; it is an activity of thought, which can be known only insofar as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing. [9]

If historians find certain periods of history unintelligible and call them dark ages, this means that the historians have discovered the limitations of their own minds. They are unable to rethink the thoughts which were fundamental to the life of those periods.

Collingwood was critical of the positivistic conception of history, describing it "as the study of successive events lying in a dead past, events to be understood as the scientist understands natural events by classifying them and establishing relations between the classes thus defined."[10]

Tholfsen sees[11] Collingwood's argument as valuable in clearing away positivist misconceptions but it contains, he claims serious limitations which preclude its acceptance. His conception of "thought", he says, is much too narrow to do justice to the actual subject matter of history. For any particular act of thought to become subject-matter for history it must be an act of "reflective thought", one "performed in the consciousness that it is being performed."[12]

Central to Collingwood's analysis of history as re-enactment of past experience is his contention that an act of thought "can sustain itself through a change of context and revive in a different one."[13] This contention obliterates, says Tholfsen, one of the essential characteristics of historical thinking.

In the very process of becoming known to the historian the "past" necessarily becomes something different from the present. The historian knows what happened since, and must make use of this knowledge in order to understand the past in a broader perspective than was possible when the past was a "lived reality". Tholfsen sees it as the historian's task to narrow the gap between the past and his present and asserts that if he is under the illusion that he can leap the gap, he is in danger of destroying the very "difference" that it is his task to grasp.

> ... if he thinks that he can recreate past thought by some form of direct apprehension, he is likely to neglect the problem of similarity and difference. [14]

References

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2. ibid., p. 37-38.
3. ibid., p. 38.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
6. ibid., p. 39.
7. ibid.
8. ibid., p. 40.
9. ibid., p. 43.
10. ibid., p. 53.
11. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 228.
12. ibid., p. 229.
13. ibid., p. 230.
14. ibid., p. 231.

(iv) Croce (1866-1952).

Like Collingwood, Croce presupposed a fundamental distinction between historical and scientific knowledge. Among the grounds upon which Gardiner sees Croce as making this distinction are the following. The historian "lives again in imagination individuals and events."[1] His material is seen as the expression of human thought and feeling which he must reconstruct and re-think for himself. In thus emphasizing the essential "inwardness" of history, Gardiner explains, Croce believed that he was laying bare the conditions which make historical description and interpretation possible. It is in virtue of the mental life the historian is capable of sharing with those whom he studies that the concepts he applies to them have meaning and intelligibility.

Two cornerstones of Croce's idealist conception of history were his conception of true history as contemporary history and his distinction between history and chronicle.

"True history is contemporary history"[2] says Croce. The condition of its existence is, he says, that the deed of which the history is told must vibrate in the soul of the historian. The documents before the historian must be intelligible and the motivation for the investigation of past fact can only be an interest in the life of the present. A further aspect of the contemporaneity of history is that it is not the characteristic of a class of histories, but an intrinsic characteristic of every history. As a result of this he says "... we must conceive the relation of history to life as that of unity; certainly not in the sense of abstract identity, but of synthetic unity ..."[3]

Once the indissoluble link he discerns between life and thought has been effected the doubts about the certainty and utility of history disappear he claims. "How could that which is a present producing of our spirit ever be uncertain? How could that knowledge be useless which solves a problem that has come forth from the bosom

of life?"[4]

Essential for history are documents. If these are lost or they "are no longer alive in the human spirit"[5] the link between life and history is broken says Croce. What remains can "only be called history in the sense that we call a man the corpse of a man."[6] Croce cites the example of the history of Hellenic painting as, in great part, a history without documents for us and which resolves itself into little more than a series of names and biographical anecdotes.

"History is prior to chronicle."[7] Prior distinction between history and chronicle had been sought in vain, he claims. It had been sought before in the quality of the facts - "the record of individual facts has been attributed to chronicle, to history that of general facts; to chronicle the record of private, to history that of public facts ..."[8] "Or else the record of important facts ... has been attributed to history, to chronicle that of the unimportant ..."[9]

The truth for Croce is that history and chronicle are not distinguishable as two forms of history but as two different spiritual attitudes. "History is living chronicle, chronicle is dead history; history is contemporary history, chronicle is past history; history is principally an act of thought, chronicle an act of will. Every history becomes chronicle when it is no longer thought, but only recorded in abstract words, which were once upon a time concrete and expressive."[10]

The discovery of the real distinction between history and chronicle leads in Croce's view to a rejection of the common presupposition of the priority of chronicle in respect to history. Precisely the opposite of this is the case: "first comes history, then chronicle. First comes the living being, then the corpse; and to make history the child of chronicle is the same thing as to make the living be born from the corpse, which is the residue of life, as chronicle is the residue of history..."[11]

"The Spirit Itself is History".[12] The human spirit, he says, preserves the mortal remains of history

empty narratives and chronicles in preparation for the moment when "they will serve to reproduce past history, enriched and made present to our spirit."[13] "And it will be impossible ever to understand anything of the effective process of historical thought unless we start from the principle that the spirit itself is history, maker of history at every moment of its existence, and also the result of all anterior history."[14]

An interesting point of contrast between Hegel and Croce is Croce's rejection of determinism and any attempt to portray history as proceeding according to plan towards a particular goal. According to Gardiner[15] the reason for Croce's rejection of causal or deterministic theories was that theories of these kinds make the fundamental mistake of treating the facts of history in a "naturalistic" fashion. That is to say, they failed to interpret historical events as expressive of human attitudes, purposes and interests which can only be grasped by the insight and understanding of the historian. Instead they were regarded, Gardiner says, as if they could be assimilated to mere "events of nature" to be classified, arranged and subsumed under laws in a purely external way.

For Croce the deterministic conception of the way the historian works is exemplified by Taine's maxim "Après la collection des faits, la recherche des causes."[16] In accordance with this formula, says Croce, facts are brute, not intellectualised. They are made intelligible by means of a search for causes. But this has the problem of inaugurating an infinite regression and the cause, to which the chain thus formed can be attached, is never found.[17]

> The search for causes, undertaken by history, is not in any way different from the procedure of naturalism, ... which abstractly analyzes and classifies reality. And to illustrate abstractly and to classify implies at the same time to judge in classifying - that is to say, to treat facts, not as acts of the spirit, conscious in the spirit that thinks them, but as external brute facts.[18]

The true point of departure in history for Croce is not the facts already disorganized and naturalized but

the mind that thinks and constructs the fact.

> Let us raise up the debased countenances of the calumniated 'brute facts' and we shall see the light of thought resplendent upon their foreheads. And that true point of departure will reveal itself not merely as a point of departure, but both as a point of arrival and of departure, not as the first step in historical construction, but the whole of history in its construction, which is also its self-construction. [19]
>
> The fact historically thought has no cause and no end outside itself, but only in itself, co-incident with its real qualities and with its qualitative reality. [20]

Elsewhere,[21] Croce condemns the "false idea of historical necessity"[22] as being "enervating for moral activity"[23] and as a breeder of "deleterious sophism which is most often pronounced in times of political up-heaval."[24] It is seized upon he says, by those who hypocritically bow to the will of God, using it as "a cloak to cover their own private convenience and advantage."[25] "But the only sort of historical necessity is the necessity which impels the historian, the logical necessity which bids him to understand the past as it was, neither praising it nor blaming it where praise and blame are out of place."[26]

References

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3. ibid., p. 228.
4. ibid., p. 229.
5. ibid.
6. ibid.
7. ibid., p. 230.
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9. ibid.

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11. ibid.
12. ibid.
13. ibid., p. 232.
14. ibid.
15. P. Gardiner, Theories of History, p. 233.
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19. ibid., p. 240.
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25. ibid., p. 514-515.
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CHAPTER 5: HISTORICAL DETERMINISM, PROPHECY AND THE CONCEPT OF ULTIMATE MEANING.

(i) Introduction.

Nash says[1] that almost without exception the classical philosophers of history have advanced forms of historical determinism or the notion of the inevitability of historical processes. He says that St. Augustine repudiated the impersonal fatalism of the Greeks but still maintained that God predetermines all that comes to pass. In Vico, Kant, Herder and Hegel, he says, the theistic element in historical determinism becomes progressively more difficult to locate as the god of these philosophers came to resemble less and less the personal God of Augustine.

Marx and Spengler (1880-1936) also regarded man as a pawn in the grasp of inexorable laws governing not only his fate but the fate of classes, states and cultures. For Spengler the basic units of history are cultures and he tried to apply the biologist's concept of living forms to the cultures. "Cultures are organisms, and world-history is their collective biography. Morphologically, the immense history of the Chinese or of the Classical Culture is the exact equivalent of the petty history of the individual man, or of the animal, or the tree, or the flower."[2]

A Culture is born, blooms and then dies when its soul has actualized the full sum of its possibilities in the shape of peoples, languages, dogmas, arts, states and sciences. Every Culture, says Spengler, passes through the age-phases of the individual man. "Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age."[3] The cycle through which a Culture passes in similar fashion to a living organism is predetermined. "Every culture, every adolescence and maturing and decay of a Culture, every one of its intrinsically necessary stages and periods, has a definite duration, always the same, always recurring with the emphasis of a symbol."[4]

Spengler borrows from biology the term "homology"

of organs to signify morphological equivalence. He then applies to historical phenomena the principle of homology and arrives at a new connotation for the word "contemporary". "I designate as contemporary two historical facts that occur in exactly the same - relative - positions in their respective Cultures, and therefore possess exactly equivalent importance."[5]

It is his aim to show that "without exception all great creations and forms in religion, art, politics, social life, economy and science appear, fulfil themselves and die down contemporaneously in all the Cultures; that the inner structure of one corresponds strictly with that of all the others; that there is not a single phenomenon of deep physiognomic importance in the record of one for which we could not find a counterpart in the record of every other; and that this counterpart is to be found under a characteristic form and in a perfectly definite chronological position."[6]

Spengler proceeds to the ultimate position of the determinist lying beyond the pedestrian ambitions of previous research "which has contented itself in the main with arranging the facts of the past so far as these were known ..."[7] He sees history as offering possibilities of "Overpassing the present as a research-limit, and predetermining the spiritual form, duration, rhythm, meaning and product of the still unaccomplished stages of our western history; and Reconstructing long-vanished and unknown epochs, even whole Cultures of the past, by means of morphological connexions, in much the same way as modern palaeontology deduces far reaching and trustworthy conclusions as to skeletal structure and species from a single unearthed skull-fragment."[8]

Toynbee considers the dominant factor in history to be the laws of historical development which govern the general course of history.

Berlin's basic position is that determinism is incompatible with a cardinal postulate of moral theory, viz., people can be held responsible for their deeds only when they were not coerced, only when they could have done

otherwise. If a historian is a determinist, he must, Berlin maintains, eliminate all moral judgments from his account of the past. He sees as one common characteristic of all deterministic outlooks, whether they be theological, metaphysical, mechanistic, religious or scientific, the implication that "... we can, if we seek to be rational, praise and condemn, warn and encourage, advocate justice or self-interest, forgive, condone, make resolutions, issue orders, feel justified remorse, only to the degree to which we remain ignorant of the true nature of the world. The more we know, the farther the area of human freedom, and consequently of responsibility, is narrowed."[9] Wisdom consists typically in understanding " ... the direction in which the world is inexorably moving ..."[10] and in identifying ... " oneself with the rising power which ushers in the new world."[11]

Berlin does not say that determinism is necessarily false and agrees that it remains a genuine problem for theologians and philosophers. The language and thoughts of the majority of human beings, including historians, do not, however, reflect an acceptance of determinism. We constantly use, he says, a class of expressions which "... plainly involve the notion of more than the merely logical possibility of the realization of alternatives other than those which were in fact realized, namely of differences between situations in which individuals can be reasonably regarded as being responsible for their acts, and those in which they can not."[12]

If the belief in freedom is a necessary illusion, he asserts, it is so deep and so pervasive that it is not felt as such. Radical changes could be made in our moral and psychological categories and modes of thought and speech to adapt to the hypothesis of determinism. But, he submits, to do so would be a fearful task and to think out what the universe of the genuine determinist would be like is not much easier than to think out "... what it

would be like to be in a timeless world, or one with a seventeen-dimensional space."[13] "For practising historians", he concludes, "determinism is not, and need not be, a serious issue."[14]

The term "historicism" is applied by different writers with varying emphases and different senses. Nash describes "historicism" as the belief that there is some ultimate meaning in history which can be explained in terms of some historical law. The belief is usually linked with some form of historical inevitability (either theistic or naturalistic): It is this conception of "historicism" (embodied in various speculative philosophies of history) that is attacked by Popper.

The phrase "the ultimate meaning of history" includes as a part of its meaning the ultimate destiny of human existence. The historian who searches for the meaning of history in this sense is not looking only at what has happened in the past, says Nash, but also at what will or must happen in the future. This is not the legitimate work of historians.

Danto[16] agrees with Löwith's claim[17] that to seek to say what the meaning of a part of history (the historical past) is in the light of the whole structure (which includes the historical future) which has been projected is an essentially theological exercise. In order to elucidate the use of the word "meaning" in this context Danto compares it with the "meaning" that may be ascribed to a particular episode in a novel. It is only after the entire novel has been read that one may judge whether the episode had "meaning" or no "meaning".

> ... we might think of philosophers of history as trying to see events as having meaning in the context of an historical whole which resembles an artistic whole, but, in this case, the whole in question is the whole of history, compassing past, present and future. Unlike those of us who have the whole novel before us, and are able to say with some authority what is the significance of this event or that, the philosopher of history does not have before him the whole of history. [18]

Nash points out[19] other grounds on which historicists have been challenged. Some have confused trends in history with laws controlling history. Some have generalized about the various units of history such as "societies", "cultures", or "civilizations" without clearly identifying these. The laws of history proposed by historicists are often vague and mere empty truisms, he asserts, and are replete with unclarified concepts such as "force", "class", "dialectic".

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3. ibid., p. 107.
4. ibid., pp.109-110.
5. ibid., p. 112.
6. ibid.
7. ibid.
8. ibid.
9. I. Berlin, "Historical Inevitability", in Four Essays on Liberty (Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 58.
10. ibid., p. 62.
11. ibid.
12. ibid., p. 69.
13. ibid., p. 72.
14. ibid., p. 73.
15. R. H. Nash, op. cit., Vol. 1, Ch. 10, p. 265.
16. A. C. Danto, Analytical Philosophy of History (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 9.
17. K. Löwith, Meaning in History (The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 1.
18. Danto, op. cit., p. 8.
19. Nash, op. cit., p. 266.

(ii) Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975).

For Toynbee[1] the proper units of historical study are not nation-states or periods but whole societies. He identifies twenty-one civilizations and propounded the doctrine of Challenge-and-Response as the explanation for the rise and decline of these civilizations. The challenge could have been posed by physical environment or threats of invasion or oppression. He observed that challenges that are too easy do not invoke sufficient response, whereas challenges that are too harsh stifle effective response.

Every civilization, Toynbee claims, rises to a Universal State in which there exists a unity of law, purpose, belief and government. The civilization starts to break up when the Creative Minority which has led the society degenerates into a mere Dominant Minority which attempts to retain by force a position which it has ceased to merit. This situation leads to the creation of a Proletariat which no longer spontaneously admires or freely imitates the ruling element, and which asserts itself, leading to a class war within the body social of a society and the breakdown of the civilization. The breakdowns in civilizations spring from inherent defects in man himself - the breakdown of creative leadership and the inability of the society to respond to further challenges. In the first six volumes of A Study of History a cyclical or spiral pattern of history emerges. In later volumes this seems to be replaced by a linear view, according to Nash, as Toynbee suggests that if modern man returned to God, Western Civilization might be saved.

Pitirim Sorokin identifies[2] two fundamental defects in Toynbee's work concerning first, "the civilization", taken by him as a unit of historical study, and, second, the conceptual scheme of genesis, growth and decline of civilizations.

Toynbee claims that "... civilizations are wholes whose parts all cohere with one another and all affect one another reciprocally ..."[3] Sorokin contends that this

assumption is not valid and that ... "his civilizations are not united systems but mere conglomerations of various civilizational objects and phenomena (congeries of systems and singular cultural traits) united only by special adjacency but not by causal or meaningful bonds. For this reason, they are not real "species of society"; therefore they can hardly be treated as unities and can hardly have any uniformities in their genesis, growth and decline."[4] Further, says Sorokin, congeries cannot grow or decline. "Like the components of a dumping place, they can only be rearranged, added to, or subtracted from ..."[5]

Sorokin says that Toynbee's acceptance of the conceptual scheme of "genesis - growth - decline" is a fatal mistake. He claims that this scheme is "... purely analogical and represents not a theory of how sociocultural phenomena change but an evaluative theory of sociocultural progress; how they <u>should</u> change."[6] From these two fundamental defects, claims Sorokin, follow many factual and logical incongruities of Toynbee's philosophy of history.

A common criticism of Toynbee's work is that his method of inquiry is not empirical. Toynbee, however, contests[7] this and explains what he means by the term "empirical method of inquiry". His approach to history is not, he admits, without preconceptions and he agrees with critics that his guiding ideas are not derived from the observation of history, and that the theories in his work are not deduced from the facts. He claims, in fact, that neither his, nor anyone else's theories are, or ever have been, or ever will be generated in this way. "If being "empirical" meant this, the word would have no counterpart in reality, and had better be struck out of the dictionary."[8]

He cites in support Popper's rejection in <u>The Poverty of Historicism</u> of

> ... the view that science begins with observations from which it derives its theories by some process of generalization or induction. I do not believe that we ever make inductive generalizations in the sense that we start from observations and try to derive our theories from them. Before we can

> collect data, our interest in data of a certain kind must be aroused: the problem always comes first. Theories are prior to observations as well as to experiments, in the sense that the latter are significant only in relation to theoretical problems. 9

Toynbee agrees that it is a legitimate requirement for theories to be tested by the facts and that they can be validated only if they are confronted with relevant facts and confirmed by them. In addition, he says, "... the whole purpose of formulating a theory or a hypothesis is the heuristic one of trying to increase our knowledge and understanding by applying the theory or hypothesis to the phenomena."[10] He maintains his claim to be empirical in this sense.

References

1. R. H. Nash, op. cit., Vol. 1, Ch. 8, p. 175 ff.
2. In P. A. Sorokin, "Toynbee's Philosophy of History", in R. H. Nash, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 178 ff.
3. ibid., p. 188.
4. ibid., pp. 188-189.
5. ibid., p. 189.
6. ibid., p. 191.
7. A. J. Toynbee, "A Study of History", passages reprinted from Vol. XII of Toynbee's "A Study of History" in Nash, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.200 ff.
8. ibid., p. 210.
9. ibid.
10. ibid., p. 211.

(iii) The Christian Understanding of History.

Jacques Maritain (born 1882) says[1] that in opposition to the oriental conception of the eternally recurrent phases of destruction and regeneration of the cosmos Christianity has taught that history works in a determined direction. History is not an eternal return. Time is linear not cyclical.

He sees the advance of history as a "double and antagonistic movement of ascent and descent. In other words, the advance of history is a two-fold simultaneous progress in good and evil."[2] He sees this as an inductive law drawn from observation. But induction must be stabilized and strengthened, he says, by philosophical reflection founded in human nature.

He rejects the idea of a merely aprioristic philosophy of history "... founded either on purely philosophical insights or on dialectical exigencies."[3] The proper objective content of the philosophy of history consists of "... intelligible data and connections which have been drawn from facts by induction, but which are checked and verified by a rational analysis."[4]

Many critics would dispute contentions like that of Maritain and deny that the Christian theory of history can be raised to the status of "law", let alone be derived by induction from observation. Nash says that speculative theories of history (and the Christian theory of history must be included here) suffer from the major defect that man occupies a particular place in the course of human history and is thus unable to "ground his view of history upon an absolute historical perspective."[5] And Maurice Mandelbaum has argued that it is impossible to establish a speculative system of history on empirical grounds.

> ... every philosopher stands in the midst of the historical process itself. It is impossible to hold that history represents a teleological development unless one knows (or believes that one knows) what the end of that process will be. But no empirical survey of the past can demonstrate the future to the philosopher of history. It therefore becomes impossible to ground historical monism upon

> an empirical appeal to the apparent teleology of past periods of history. In order to establish historical monism upon a teleological view of the period of history it is therefore necessary to transcend one's temporal standpoint. In this, Augustine and the entire Christian philosophy of history again represent a sounder approach to the problem of historical monism. For in Augustine and his followers we find an appeal to the nontemporal realm of God as the basis of historical monism. [6]

Christian philosophers of history would claim that these problems can be obviated if one assumes the truth of the Christian view of history. In essence this is that God entered human life in the form of Jesus Christ and "revealed to men the origin and goal of the historical drama, the criteria for significance and value in the process, the true nature of the human participants in the drama and the ethical values appropriate to the process, ..."[7]

Reinhold Niebuhr says that the interpretation of history in the light of the Christian belief in the significance of the life, death and resurrection of Christ "... creates a structure of meaning in which the history of a particular nation, as the center of the whole of history is unequivocally transcended."[8] Further, he says that the conception of a divine sovereignty over history establishes a dimension in which there can be meaning but which does not demand that the facts of history be related to each other in terms of natural or logical necessity.

Maritain, in his criticism of Hegel, reveals a similar viewpoint. He recognizes that it was Hegel who had the place and importance of the philosophy of history definitely recognized among the intellectual disciplines. But he claims also, that "he warped and spoiled the philosophy of history in a pernicious way."[9] This he did, partly by refusing to recognize that the philosophy of history is an inductive discipline. Maritain claims that he tried to have experience and induction appear as a mere illustration of a logical a priori necessity which he had discovered by merely logical means.

He further criticizes Hegelian metaphysics and

the Hegelian philosophy of history as a modern version of pure gnosticism. "Trying to re-engender the whole of reality by means of dialectics, he engulfed the world of experience in logical entities - entia rationis - in mutual conflict, which composed for him an immense polymorphous and moving idol, as vast as the world, whose name was first Nature, and then History, when man emerges from nature, and when the anthropo-theistic process of self-realization is thus revealed."[10]

Both Maritain and Niebuhr deny that man is the object of inexorable deterministic forces and insist on the existence of human free will. "The freedom of God over and beyond the structures of life makes room for the freedom of man. All forms of naturalistic or spiritualistic determinism are broken."[11]

Maritain cannot accept the place accorded by Hegel to the individual person and human freedom in history. Hegel, says Maritain, explains how "the genius of history - the cunning of Reason - uses the interests and passions, even the most egoistic passions of the great men of history: they are in reality the puppets of the Weltgeist, of the spirit of the world."[12]

Maritain acknowledges that there are some changes in human history which are necessary; but the manner or mode in which these changes occur is not necessary: it depends on human will and human freedom. He quotes the expression by Pierre Vendryès of the notion that there are in human history necessary trends and, at the same time, no inevitability.

> Jamais les engrenages de l'histoire n'ont un caractère fatal. Les cycles n'ont pas une évolution déterminée. Chacun d'eux peut se trouver ouvert ou fermé ... Tout en étant entraînés par elle, les hommes font leur histoire. Entre les événements il reste toujours quelque intervalle libre dans lequel la volonté humaine puisse développer ses propres chances.[13]

Maritain's view of man and his freedom diverge also from the role assigned by Marx to man. Marx insisted that men make their own history, but they do not make it

freely. There is no capacity in man for modifying and orientating the movement of history. The great man in history, the revolutionary thinker merely discovers the preordained direction of history's movement.

For the Christian, Maritain says, history has a direction "determined with regard to certain fundamental characteristics by the immense dynamic mass of the past pushing if forward, but undetermined with regard to specific orientations and with regard to the spirit or the manner in which a change, necessary in other respects, will be carried into existence."[14] In the undetermined area man's freedom comes into play.

References

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3. ibid., p. 11.
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6. M. Mandelbaum, The Problem of Historical Knowledge (Harper and Row, 1967), p. 319.
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8. R. Niebuhr, "Faith and History" in Nash, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 246.
9. J. Maritain, op. cit., p. 19.
10. ibid., p. 23.
11. R. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 246.
12. J. Maritain, op. cit., pp.24-25.
13. ibid., p. 26.
14. ibid., p. 27.

(iv) Popper's[1] Critique of Historicist Prophecies.

Sir Karl Popper terms "historicism" the doctrine that it is the task of the social sciences to propound historical prophecies and that these are needed for the conduct of politics in a rational way.

He recognizes the tenets of historicism as forming a very important part of Marxism or Scientific Socialism and acknowledges his analysis of the role of prediction and prophecy as a criticism of the historical method of Marxism. He claims that the kind of prophecies Marxism offers are in their logical character more akin to those of the Old Testament than to those of modern physics.

He brings the central ideas of the historicist method into focus by identifying the historicist doctrine of the social sciences and the historicist doctrine of politics. The former is the claim that it is the task of the social sciences to make historical predictions such as of social revolutions. The latter is the idea that it is the task of politics to lessen the birth pangs of impending political developments. The ideas inherent in these doctrines "express one of the oldest dreams of mankind - the dream of prophecy, the idea that we can know what the future has in store for us, and that we can profit from such knowledge by adjusting our policy to it."[2]

Popper admits that all theoretical sciences are predicting sciences and that there are social sciences which are theoretical. But this does not mean that the task of the social sciences is historical prophecy and the impression that it may do so disappears he says, if a distinction is made between what he calls on the one side "scientific prediction" and "unconditional historical prophecies" on the other.

Ordinary predictions in science are conditional, he says, and unconditional scientific predictions can sometimes be derived from these conditional scientific predictions together with historical statements which assert that the conditions in question are fulfilled. Popper

contends that the historicist does not and cannot possibly derive his historical prophecies from conditional scientific predictions.

> ... long term prophecies can be derived from scientific conditional predictions only if they apply to systems which can be described as well as isolated, stationary, and recurrent. These systems are very rare in nature; and modern society is surely not one of them. [3]

In the field of biology, he points out that the life cycles of organisms are part of a semi-stationary or very slowly changing biological chain of events. Further, scientific predictions about these life cycles can be made in so far as the biological system in question is treated as stationary and in so far as we abstract from the slow evolutionary changes. He asserts, however, that no basis can be found in the biological example for the contention that the method of long-term unconditional prophecy can be applied to human history. "Society is changing, developing. Its development is not, in the main, a repetitive one."[4] "The fact that we can prophesy eclipses does not ... provide a valid reason for expecting that we may predict revolutions."[5]

References

1. The source for this section is K. R. Popper, "Prediction and Prophecy in the Social Sciences" in Gardiner, Theories of History, p. 276-285.
2. ibid., p. 278.
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4. ibid.
5. ibid., p. 280.

PART TWO

PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COGNITIVE STATUS AND METHODOLOGY OF HISTORY

INTRODUCTION.

Analytical philosophy of history encompasses a form of inquiry distinct from speculative, or what Danto calls substantive, philosophy of history viz. the attempts to discover a theory concerned with the whole of history where the term "whole of history" includes not only the historical past, but the present and future as well.

Analytical philosophy of history is concerned with the conceptual and methodological problems which arise out of the practice of history and out of the writing of speculative philosophy of history.

It is concerned, for example, with such matters as (i) the status of history in the field of human knowledge. Is history a science, an art or is it sui generis?

(ii) the nature and logical structure of historical explanation; the narrative style as explanatory mode and the part played (if any) by general laws in explanation;

(iii) scepticism about the possibility of historical knowledge; the objectivity of historical conclusions; historical relativism and the part played by the historian's value judgments in the selection of evidence and arrival at conclusions; and the nature of historical interpretation;

(iv) the concept of cause in history;

(v) the nature of the historical individual and the relation between the historian's statements about the actions of individual human beings and the careers of nations, classes, movements or institutions.

It is very difficult to give simple, cut-and-dried answers to questions arising out of these matters. Gardiner sees[1] dangers emanating from a tendency to view such questions as: "Is history a science?" as like the question: "Is a whale a mammal?" which can be settled by appealing to certain accepted criteria. The question: "What is the nature of historical explanation?" is dangerous, he says, in that it implies that, provided a careful enough search is conducted, a clear and distinct

idea of what historical explanation really is may be found.

There has been the implication that if the search were conducted with scientific rigour and precision there would be found by inductive method sufficient specific instances of historical explanations with uniform characteristics to warrant the basing thereon of a universal general statement in answer to the question. As Magee has pointed out[2], in the matter of producing useful results, science delivers the goods and continues to do so by way of inductive method. Yet philosophers have found unsatisfying the discoveries that have come to light as a result of their searches for answers to questions such as that under consideration.

If Popper's analysis of induction is correct they have been deluded by assuming inductive methods to be the basis of the logic of scientific discovery. In The Logic of Scientific Discovery he outlines his reasons for rejecting inductive logic. The principle of induction can neither be a purely logical truth like a tautology or an analytic statement, nor can its truth be known from experience as this would mean employing inductive inferences leading to an infinite regress. Nothing is gained, moreover, he says, if the principle of induction is taken not as true but only as probable. "In short, like every other form of inductive logic, the logic of probable inference, or "probability logic," leads either to an infinite regress, or to the doctrine of apriorism."[3]

Induction is a dispensable concept, a myth. Popper recognizes that it may be said that his rejection of induction deprives empirical science of what appears to be its most important characteristic. But his reply is that his "main reason for rejecting inductive logic is precisely that it does not provide a suitable distinguishing mark of the empirical, non-metaphysical, character of a theoretical system; or in other words, that it does not provide a suitable 'criterion of demarcation'."[4]

It would appear that philosophers considering the question: "What is the nature of historical explanation?" would find linguistic analysis, psychology or metaphysics to be more fruitful fields for their endeavours.

References

1. P. Gardiner, The Nature of Historical Explanation (Oxford University Press, 1961), Introduction, p. xi.
2. Bryan Magee, Popper, (Fontana, 1973), p. 22.
3. Karl R. Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, (Hutchinson, London, 1972), p. 30.
4. ibid., p. 34.

CHAPTER 6: THE STATUS OF HISTORY - IS IT A SCIENCE, OR AN AUTONOMOUS DISCIPLINE?

(i) Is history a science?

Cohen sees the quarrel engendered by the question as having been largely verbal, "more concerned with maintaining or rejecting the prestige that the word "science" carries nowadays than with the precise meaning of the question."[1] If "science" means, he says, knowledge based on the most careful examination of all the available evidence, the scientific historian certainly aims at such knowledge and his work can be judged by the extent to which he attains his aim. He sees the procedure of scientific history as not differing significantly from that of a rationally developed legal system.

To those who deny that history is a science the latter term denotes those investigations which aim at the discovery of laws, i.e. of universal relations between repeatable elements. History is concerned with establishing specific events that occurred at a definite time and place whereas the facts or laws which general physical science seeks to establish deal with repeatable elements and assert that wherever and whenever A, then B.

Cohen's analysis here is supported by that of Ernest Nagel whose perspective is that of the distinction between two allegedly different types of sciences: "... the nomothetic, which seek to establish abstract general laws for indefinitely repeatable processes; and the ideographic, which aim to understand the unique and non-recurrent."[2]

Nagel shows that it is false to hold that the natural sciences can be regarded as exclusively nomothetic. No conclusions, he says, concerning the actual character of specific things and processes can be derived from general statements alone. Furthermore, geophysics and animal ecology "... are concerned with the spatiotemporal distribution and development of individual systems."[3]

Neither can history be held to be a purely ideographic discipline. The historian, in his discourse

about what is individual and singular, requires general descriptive terms and his recognition of various kinds or types of things, Nagel says, contains implicit acknowledgement of numerous empirical regularities. In addition, the attempt to explain actions in terms of their causes and consequences assumes supposedly well-established laws of causal dependence.

Cohen sees an unmistakable difference between history and general science in respect of the significance of laws on the one hand and the importance of establishing specific events on the other. But it is obscured by two considerations, viz., the presence of historical elements in all sciences (except pure mathematics) and the impossibility of eliminating laws from history. The historical element in all natural sciences can be seen, he says, in the records of observations or experiments which always report what happened at a given time or place. Some sciences are about individual objects, celestial or terrestrial, about the sun, the moon, or the earth. History, he says, in trying to establish the occurrence of individual events on the basis of evidence must assume causal laws according to which the phenomena of human life are connected.

> It is obvious that whenever the historian gives a full account of any event or explains it in terms of certain motives or as conditioned by certain physical or social circumstances, he assumes psychologic, economic and other social as well as physical laws. The assumption of such invariant uniformities is necessary not only to what has been called the process of historical interpretation but to make possible any inference from the brute data in the present - the documents or remains before him - to what must have happened in the past. [4]

Assumptions of the kind noted above he sees as necessary in order to appraise the weight to be given to diverse accounts of the same events, and in hypotheses of this character, he says the historian finds the clues that lead from known facts to antecedent and consequent conditions and thus pushes forward the frontiers of knowledge.

In these respects he sees history as applied

science as is geology, medicine or engineering. There is a difference, however. The engineer or geologist knows explicitly and precisely what laws he is applying in order to explain phenomena and the laws have been or can be verified. The historian seldom explicitly states the laws of human events that he assumes and they are not always capable of being formulated with any precision.

Cohen sees another sense in which history is often claimed to be a science and that is in the sense that there are laws peculiar to human history. He refers here to the views found in the works of Vico, Comte and Spengler supposing the existence of laws manifested in the development of every nation or culture. According to these writers every nation or civilization must go through the same series of stages, e.g., the ages of gods, heroes and men according to Vico; theology, metaphysics and positive sciences according to Comte; or the four stages of Spengler - "Every Culture passes through the age-phase of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age."[5]

But if such sociologic laws could be definitely established and "nations were as plentiful as fruit flies or cabbages"[6] such laws would be like the biologic formulation of the life cycles of animals or plants. But would that establish history as a science?

Cohen lists some historical objections to the theory that all peoples or civilizations must go through the same stages. Firstly, no two nations have been known to go through exactly the same career. No two nations are exactly alike in their composition and environment. Perfect repetition is impossible for the further reason that every nation learns more or less from the experience of those that preceded it.

The fact remains, Cohen insists, that even if all the known sequences of historic events could be subsumed under general laws of development such laws would not constitute history. History deals with unique events. The historian is concerned only with determining what

happened and, if possible, why it happened as it did and when it did. History uses laws to explain facts but its primary business is not the establishment of laws.

"... any science of social phenomena must, if it is to be alike in form to physical science be expressible in differential equations, that is, in microscopic rather than in macroscopic cycles."[7]

He quotes Berr and Febvre as saying "If every thing in the realm of the real were subject to immutable law there would be no history."[8] But, he counters, "with equal force it may be said that if all knowledge were of the past, history would be the only kind of knowledge."[9]

The distinctive character of history as an organization of knowledge is highlighted says Cohen, by a comparison with mathematics. The difference between the two he characterizes as one of degree of abstractness or degree of individuality. Mathematics, he says, uses concrete material as a spring-board from which to jump into the realm of abstract relations. History utilizes all abstract knowledge or its tacit assumptions to illumine the individual event in time and place. He points out that history and mathematics are alike in one respect: they are applicable to every field of empirical knowledge.

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3. ibid., p. 374.
4. M. R. Cohen, op. cit., p. 37.
5. O. Spengler, op. cit., p. 107.
6. M. R. Cohen, op. cit., p. 39.
7. ibid., p. 40.
8. ibid., p. 41.
9. ibid.

(ii) Is history sui generis?

Gardiner discerns[1] two forms of arguments, a weaker and a stronger, claiming that it is impossible to analyse historical explanation in terms of regularity. The weaker, he says, admits the importance of causality as a category of historical thought but denies that it has the function in history that it has elsewhere. The stronger questions the place of causality in history altogether, suggesting that historical explanation has its own categories. According to the stronger argument, in order to understand history, the scientific conception of knowledge must be discarded and a distinct type of knowledge recognized. This type of knowledge says Gardiner, has been termed "insight", "intuition", "empathy" or "recreating past experience" (Collingwood).

He quotes Collingwood as saying: "Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the same time it is the redoing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present. Its object is therefore not a mere object, something outside the mind which knows it; it is an activity of thought which can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts it and knows itself as so doing. To the historian, the activities whose history he is studying are not spectacles to be watched, but experiences to be lived through in his own mind."[2] In line with this approach, Gardiner recognizes the difficulty of assimilating historical explanation to scientific explanation. But he questions the existence of a "clear-cut and unbridgeable cleavage between history and other forms of knowledge."[3]

He examines what is meant by saying that "history is autonomous." If it is affirmed as an a priori self-evident truth he sees this as introducing an undesirable subjectivity into the matter. Alternatively, he says, it appears sometimes to be suggested that the autonomous nature of history follows from the impossibility of assimilating historical explanation to ordinary causal explanation. But, he points out, when it is asked why this is impossible the answer seems frequently to be that this must be so in

virtue of the nature of historical knowledge. He concludes that this argument cannot be used without circularity to justify the theory that history is sui generis.

Gardiner sees the philosophy of history as tending to fall between two extremes. At one extreme lies the view that history is a branch of knowledge which is sui generis. At the other, there is the claim that history is a science. He sees both views, taken in isolation, as leading to difficulties yet suggests there is truth in both the contending views.

He argues that an examination of features of historical writing and thinking precludes the possibility of a wholesale assimilation of historical explanation to explanation as it occurs in the sciences. Nevertheless, he argues, such an examination does not necessitate drawing the inference that "the historian's field of study is in a mysterious way distinct from the world of the scientist or of the ordinary person."[4] Gardiner's aim is "to try to show that the differences between history and other branches of inquiry may be accounted for, not on grounds that necessitate the postulation of such worlds, but on other grounds connected with the purposes of historical research, and with the methods and the conceptual frameworks appropriate to those purposes."[5]

Gardiner identifies four propositions often put forward in support of the theory that history is an autonomous branch of study.

A. Historical events are past events and hence cannot be known in the manner in which present events are known.

B. Historical events are unique and unclassifiable.

C. History describes the actions, statements, and thoughts of human beings not the behaviour of "dead matter" with which science is concerned.

D. Historical events have an irreducible richness and complexity.

A. Is there a problem about the Past? The

difficulty about past events stems, he says, from the belief that one can only correctly be said to know an event when one is actually observing it: true knowledge is knowledge by acquaintance. The net result of this belief, says Gardiner, is that some philosophers have assumed that there is something radically wrong or suspect about statements referring to the past.

He quotes solutions to this dilemma about the past proposed by Oakeshott: "If the historical past be knowable, it must belong to the present world of experience..."[6] The past "varies with the present rests upon the present, is the present."[7] In support of this last proposition Gardiner says that Oakeshott claims that the expression, "what really happened," must be replaced by the expression "what the evidence obliges us to believe".

Gardiner says that it is not legitimate to confuse the evidence for a past event, which is admittedly present, with the event for which it is evidence, when this is past. In part this confusion stems from the use of criteria of tense for deciding the reality or otherwise of an event. Gardiner says that the sense of speaking of events as "real" or "unreal" is quite separate from the present - past distinction. The tendency to assimilate past events to dream events, to deny their reality on account of their pastness is unwarranted. Evidence can be produced to justify the use of the word "real" with regard to events and we do not require, he says, that the event in question be observable here and now.

B. Can uniqueness be claimed for history? The claim for uniqueness in history rests on the claim that history is about what happened on particular occasions; not about what usually happens or what always happens under certain circumstances. The historian, Gardiner says, concentrates upon the event in its unique individuality, regarding it, not as an instance of a type, not as a member of a class, but as something which is to be viewed for and in itself.

Gardiner does not agree with the belief, often inferred from the contention above, that the uniqueness of

the events studied by the historian excludes the possibility of their being classified or generalized about in any way. Nor, in his view, does the historian's interest in events in their unique individuality in any way entail the view that the description or explanation of the events in question is of a peculiar kind. Gardiner points out that engineers and architects, while concerned with building particular bridges and houses, are not free to ignore the laws of mechanics. In similar fashion, he argues, the historian for all his attention to the individual and the unique is not free to disregard general laws in his work of construction.

C. Gardiner examines the "inside-outside" theory of historical events which fails to elucidate in any definitive way the status of history. He quotes Collingwood to present the outline of the "inside-outside" theory of historical events:

> The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event. By the outside of an event I mean anything belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements ... By the inside of an event I mean that in it which can only be described in terms of thought ... The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other. He is investigating not mere events (where by a mere event I mean one which has only an outside and no inside) but actions, and an action is the unity of the outside and the inside of an event ... he must always remember that ... his main task is to think himself into this action to discover the thought of its agent.[8]
>
> The processes of nature can therefore be properly described as sequences of mere events, but those of history cannot. They are not processes of mere events but processes of actions, which have an inner side, consisting of processes of thought; and what the historian is looking for is these processes of thought. All history is the history of thought.[9]

Gardiner believes Collingwood's formulation above is misleading, "because the introduction of a spatial metaphor gives the impression that what are called the "insides" of events are queer objects, invisible engines that make the wheels go round."[10] It is then only too easy, he says, to move from this to the supposition that,

in order to know the insides of historical events some peculiar technique is required. A picture is built up of the historian as a man who examines recalcitrant entities - thoughts and intentions, plans and mental processes - by means of "intuition" or "re-enactment of past experience."

D. May a clue to the status of history be found in the language of historical description? Gardiner examines the difference between the language of scientific description and that of historical description. The language in which the discoveries of any particular branch of scientific inquiry are expressed is adapted, he points out, to the systematically organized body of laws or hypotheses which constitutes that branch of inquiry. As a consequence, the concepts employed by a particular science have a more or less precise definition.

"Scientific concepts are introduced when a particular empirical correlation has become analytic within the scientific system in question: such concepts are useful in order conveniently to refer to an indefinite number of observed correlations of a certain type. They are shorthand devices."[11] Gardiner points out that, in historical writing, on the other hand, "the reference to a system of interrelated and interdependent statements, embodying precise correlations between selected features of experience, is lacking; and in consequence we find also absent the usage of concepts whose meanings can be expressed in exact terms."[12]

He denies that there is thereby anything "wrong" with history. He emphasizes that the kind of language we use is related to our purposes and interests. Language used for certain purposes requires a conceptual apparatus different from that required by language used for other purposes. Historical concepts like "revolution" were not evolved, he says, to meet the descriptive needs of an expanding scientific system. They are not used for the formulation of general hypotheses or laws or in making predictions. Concepts like "revolution" were developed, he says, to meet the requirements of those who wanted a short means of referring to a fairly common instance of the behaviour of human beings in society.

He sees the crux of the distinction between the historian and the scientist as follows: "The scientist frames hypotheses of precision and wide generality by a continual refining away of irrelevant factors. Things are otherwise with the historian. His aim is to talk about what happened on particular occasions in all its variety, all its richness, and his terminology is adapted to this object."[13] This is the reason, he says, why terms like "revolution" are left so vague and open. They are accommodating terms, able to cover a vast number of events falling within an indefinitely circumscribed range. The spread of the historian's concepts involves a complementary limitation upon the generalizations in which they may occur.

References

1. In P. Gardiner, The Nature of Historical Explanation, Part II The Subject-Matter of History, p. 28.
2. ibid., p. 29.
3. ibid.
4. ibid., p. 33.
5. ibid.
6. ibid., p. 35.
7. ibid., p. 35-36.
8. ibid., p. 46.
9. ibid., pp. 46-47.
10. ibid., p. 47.
11. ibid., p. 53.
12. ibid., p. 54.
13. ibid., p. 60.

(iii) Conclusion.

The questions are raised and elucidated, but, it appears, one would seek in vain for conclusive answers. It would seem that some of the questions about the status of history are indeed, as Gardiner suggests, spurious. Perhaps the very source of the questions is the delusion hinted at by Dewey when he said that: "There is something both ridiculous and disconcerting in the way in which men have let themselves be imposed upon, so as to infer that scientific ways of thinking of objects give the inner reality of things, and that they put a mark of spuriousness upon all other ways of thinking of then, and perceiving and enjoying them."[1]

Many would claim that the most satisfactory way of looking at the status of history is in the light of the pragmatist theory of knowledge that knowledge and its verification must come to us through action. This theory is espoused by G. J. Renier:

> The practical action which provides knowledge and the verification of knowledge, is experimentation, in the case of the scientific worker, and in that of the historian it is the telling of the story. It is only as he tells his story that the historian finally weighs his evidence, pronounces on the quality and reliability of his traces, and exercises his critical function to the fullest extent. [2]

In judging the practical activity, the story, scientific criteria of certitude are irrelevant, and yield to practical and ethical criteria. What is important is that the story must not violate the conception of honesty of the historian or his colleagues. "The story must pass muster before the intellectual integrity of the men of the craft, and this is the equivalent of the experiment in science."[3]

W. B. Gallie also favoured the view that the kind of understanding achieved by history is akin to that which emerges from a story. Gallie proposed two theses[4] that the crucial developments in any story are essentially contingent and that the act of following such developments

depends upon their human interest, their power to enlist certain peculiarly human feelings. Ideally, a story is self explanatory as one follows it. The more skilful the story-teller, the rarer will be the intrusion of explicit explanations.

The sense of "following" - following to a conclusion - that applies to stories is of an altogether different kind, he claims, from the sense of following an argument so that we see that its conclusion follows.

> ... The conclusion of a story is essentially a different kind of conclusion from that which is synonymous with "statement proved" or "result deduced or predicted." The conclusion of any worthwhile story is not something that can be deduced or predicted, nor even something that can be seen at a later stage to have been theoretically or ideally predictable on the basis of what had been revealed at some earlier stage.[5]

The familiar and unquestionable facts of the experience of following a story are, he says, that we follow a story through or across contingencies - accidents, coincidences, unpredictable events of all kinds. Yet the story's general direction and continuous advance towards its final conclusion somehow succeed in rendering these contingencies acceptable. But to traditional philosophical ways of thinking, he points out, there is something paradoxical about the juxtaposition of the terms: "contingent" and "acceptable".

> By definition, what is contingent is not under our intellectual command: it is the unexpected blow that gets under our intellectual defences. But only that which is, or which can be brought under our intellectual command, so that it conforms to our anticipatory (or in some cases, timeless) classificatory systems is intellectually acceptable.[6]

The view, Gallie says, that we must transform the appearance of "acceptable contingencies" into something more intellectually respectable, "has the effect of hamstringing any attempt to describe what is peculiar to historical thinking: its attempt to understand, and its success in understanding, particular actions."[7] In the case of a story he claims that there are no definite rules to

decide what contingencies can be accepted into it. It is up to the writer to vindicate his acceptance of a given contingency in terms of the subsequent sufficiently continuous development of his story.

Gallie comes to the conclusion that the kind of understanding history aims at is quite different from that which is characteristic of the natural sciences. The claim can be supported, he says, that history is a species of the genus Story.

References

1. From "The Quest for Certainty" as quoted in G. J. Renier, History its purpose and Method, (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 147.
2. ibid., p. 159.
3. ibid.
4. In W. B. Gallie, Philosophy and the Historical Understanding (Schocken Books, New York, 1964), p. 22 ff.
5. ibid., p. 23.
6. ibid., p. 30.
7. ibid.

CHAPTER 7: EXPLANATION IN HISTORY.

(i) Introduction.

The question of the nature of explanation in history is closely related to the foregoing examination of the cognitive status of history. If the positivist, who claims that methodologically there are no basic differences between history and the natural sciences, is correct, then it would appear that all genuine explanations must conform to the same deductive model, called by Dray the "Covering Law Model."

This model of historical explanation was propounded by Carl G. Hempel and, according to it, a genuine explanation must satisfy three conditions:

"(1) the explanans (the set of premises that make up the explanation) must contain a set of statements asserting the occurrence of certain events; (2) all of the statements in the explanans must be reasonably well confirmed; and (3) the explanandum (that which is being explained) must follow deductively from the explanans."[1]

Those who claim autonomy for history as a cognitive discipline would reject the idea that genuine explanations must follow the deductive model and claim for historical explanations a logic of their own. The claim may also be made, by Walsh,[2] for example, that explanation emerges through the process of colligation, which involves the tracing of the intrinsic relations of an event to other events and locating it in its historical context. The idea of the narrative style as explanatory mode would appear to be supported by Gallie.

Considerable divergence of opinion exists also on the role of generalizations and laws in historical explanations.

References

1. R. H. Nash, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 76.
2. In W. H. Walsh, op. cit., ch. 3, p. 59 ff.

(ii) The view that there is little difference between explanation in science and explanation in history.

Frankel claims[1] that it is misleading to believe that explanation in history is radically different from explanation in other fields as a result of the fact that the historian is primarily concerned with making singular statements. He cites the fact that geology is predominantly concerned with discovering individual occurrences that have taken place at some particular place and time. On the other hand, beliefs that are general in character have to be taken into account in history. For example, general beliefs about the physical world, human nature, social structure and about the ways in which types of events are generally related to one another have to be invoked, he claims, to justify the inferences drawn about the past from traces left in the present.

He does concede that special problems arise in historical inquiry leading in part to the view that "...an incorrigibly subjective element of interpretation creeps into all historical explanations."[2] It is questionable, however, he claims, that these problems justify the view that historical explanation is something whose logic is discontinuous from the logic of disciplined inquiry elsewhere.

Frankel considers the problem that it is the case that historical explanations neither offer nor clearly presuppose precise, finished generalizations from which the actual events recorded can in fact be inferred. In addition, the proofs which historians provide are of a "comparatively low order."[3]

He discounts the significance of these matters by pointing out that what these features of historical explanation point to is a contingent fact about the state of the historian's knowledge - our present poverty with respect to firm and reliable generalizations about human affairs and difficulty of getting at past facts. "... with respect to any specific historical occurrence, these are empirical and contingent states of affairs; they are not

unalterable logical necessities."[4]

The alleged problems that historical explanations do not have a predictive (or retrodictive) value, that they state essential conditions for the occurrence of an event, but not the sufficient conditions, do not necessarily mean that an ideal of full explanation cannot be met. Frankel points out that a request for explanation is often satisfied by "... an account of the stages of a process, the last stage of which is the phenomenon in the shape in which it exhibits those traits about which we have asked our question."[5]

However, this form of explanation is not distinctively "historical" as it occurs in other domains such as embryology. In addition, Frankel points out "... the statement of the stages of a process, or of essential conditions for the occurrence of an event rest as much as does a fully predictive explanation on tacit or expressed generalizations."[6] "Otherwise we could not distinguish between a mere succession of events and a series of connected events."[7]

The criticism is often raised against the generalizations used by historians that they are specious. When all the restrictions and qualifications are listed the generalization appears to be, in reality, a disguised singular statement. Frankel points out that in the face of counterinstances the historian tends to defend his generalization, not by showing that it derives from a more embracing scheme of generalizations, but by telling more about the actual story and by supplying hitherto missing restrictive claims, so that the apparent counterinstances are shown not really to apply to the events in question. Consequently, the difficulty of refuting the historian's generalization appears to be a problem of refuting a disguised singular statement. Further, it is argued, nothing is presupposed about invariant or statistically frequent relations between events of given types in the causal relations asserted by historians.

Frankel claims in counter-argument to this interpretation that " ... most historical generalizations do not seem attempts to state invariant relations, but only correlations of a significant frequency. Hence the historian feels free to cling to his generalization even though counter-instances may be produced. The difficulty in refuting such generalizations does not lie in the fact that they are disguised singular statements. It lies in the fact that the imputed frequency of the relation in question is left highly indeterminate."[8]

A further aspect of the generalizations that historians employ is that some seem to have the status of methodological rules for organizing specific materials under inquiry. He cites as examples those generalizations involving expressions like "the Puritan mind", "the Prussian officer" and "the Victorian businessman." Such rules are not peculiar to history but exist in other domains, he says, when inquiry has reached a certain stage of development.

References

1. In C. Frankel, "Explanation and Interpretation in History" in Gardiner, Theories of History, p. 410.
2. ibid., p. 410.
3. ibid., p. 411.
4. ibid.
5. ibid., p. 412.
6. ibid.
7. ibid.
8. ibid., p. 416.

(iii) The anti-Hempelian argument.

Michael Scriven argues[1] that the deductive model of explanation is wrong. His first objection to the deductive model of historical explanation is "that it can be formulated only by ignoring the distinction between an explanation and its justification."[2]

He challenges the view that an historical explanation is inadequate if it is bereft of laws from which the alleged consequence can be deduced, if it is merely what Hempel calls an "explanation sketch". This "... consists of a more or less vague indication of the laws and initial conditions considered as relevant, and it needs 'filling out' in order to turn into a full-fledged explanation. This filling out requires further empirical research, for which the sketch suggests the direction ..."[3]

Scriven proposes an alternative description of "explanation sketches". He regards them as explanations as they stand, not incomplete in any sense in which they should be complete. What is not included in the statement of explanation are the grounds which could be given in support of it, if pressed.

He avers that it is more profitable to employ a tripartite division of the deficiencies of explanations as "inaccurate", "inadequate" or "irrelevant" rather than to describe them in the single blanket terms "incorrect" or "incomplete" or "improper". He claims that the kinds of grounds which are required for defense against the errors of inaccuracy, inadequacy, and irrelevance are radically different. He refers to grounds against inaccuracy as "truth-justifying grounds."[4] "Role-justifying grounds"[5] are grounds for thinking that a statement is adequate for the task of explaining whatever it is to be explained. The third group of grounds, he says, support interpretation of the practical requirements of the person or public to whom the explanation is addressed. He cites as an example the need for an explanation of someone's behaviour in terms of his intentions rather than his muscular operations. The

grounds involved here he calls "type-justifying grounds".[6]

Inappositeness is the only error in giving the wrong type of explanation, not inaccuracy or inadequacy. "There is no such thing as the explanation of something unless a decision is made about type."[7] Scriven asserts that it would be absurd to include considerations of the kind involved in selecting the type of explanation, as part of the explanation itself. Yet, he points out, there is no essential difference between doing that and including role - or truth-justifying grounds in the explanation.

The procedure of justifying assertions in history does not necessarily end at any particular point says Scriven. There can be further grounds, which he calls second-level grounds, to defend the first-level grounds. The regress involved here can be dealt with analogously, he says, to the puzzle about complete explanations in which the question is asked: how can anything ever be completely explained, when, in order to explain anything we must appeal to something else which we have not explained? His answer to this puzzle is to show that if an explanation is viewed as a linkage between what we do not understand and what we do understand, and there can be no such linkage if we understand nothing, then the idea of a complete explanation is the idea of a linkage of two things when there is only one thing to link. The idea of a complete explanation is thus, "like the sound of one hand clapping, ... a logical echo, a thing of no substance whose loss is no loss."[8]

Similarly, says Scriven, a "complete" justification of a statement can never be given. But to use "complete" in this sense means abandoning the possibility of ever applying it. It is therefore better not to use it in the above sense but to use it, as one normally does, in the perfectly good sense of "providing enough evidence to make doubt unreasonable."[9] "Exactly how much this is, will depend upon the context, upon what kind of doubts are being considered and what kind of assertion is being made

(singular, universal, statistical, theoretical, observational, etc.)."[10]

Scriven points out that in the Hempelian notion of a complete explanation a natural stopping point appears in that an explanation will be said to be complete when it enables the deduction of the fact to be explained from at least one law plus antecedent conditions. He says that if mere deduction were required any statement of fact could be deduced from a logically trivial inflation of it, such as its double negation and, thereby be "completely explained". He argues that this kind of "complete explanation" will in some contexts provide too much, and in some too little, and in others the wrong type of explanation or even no explanation at all.

He reiterates his belief in the illegitimacy of claiming, as he believes Hempel does, that for completeness' sake the evidence for judgments of explanation-type should be included in the explanation. "It should be seen from the beginning that the completeness or correctness of an explanation is a notion without meaning except in a given context from which the type can be inferred and in which the required facts are known."[11] Given details of the context, he says, there can be produced in history facts and not laws as a perfectly adequate explanation. He rejects the claim that completeness of explanation requires more grounds while conceding that justification may require more role-, truth-, or type-justifying grounds. In certain contexts, such as with a political joke, we can assume that the audience has no need to be reminded of the relevant laws or given the entire background.

> Explanations are practical, context-bound affairs, and they are merely converted into something else when set out in full deductive array. Just as the joke becomes, when all the context is laboriously presented, a sociological explanation of a joke (and usually no longer funny), so the explanation when dressed in its deductive robes becomes a proof or a justification of an explanation (and usually no longer explains but demonstrates).[12]

Scriven rejects the claim that an explanation needs laws. He recognizes the difficulty of giving any enlighten-

ing short characterization of an explanation but points the way thus - "If it is any help to say that explanations must produce understanding and not simply knowledge, this can be said."[13] To be more specific about explanations than this is to restrict the concept, says Scriven, and he claims that the apparent attractions of so doing have proved to be largely illusory.

The difference between understanding and knowing is brought about, he says, by saying that understanding (and hence explanation) involves knowing all about something with respect to a certain category of questions. Thus to understand an action involves, in some contexts, knowing about the motives for it, the character of the actor and the circumstances of the action. Scriven cites as an example the understanding of the rules of Hanoverian succession. No laws, he says, are deductively invoked in the explanation of these: "... explanation here consists in exegetical clarification and examination of the relations between the rules, e.g., with respect to consistency, redundancy, function, etc."[14] Another example of explanation in which no laws of nature are involved would be the explanation of the symbolism of the Imperial regalia at a coronation.

These examples, says Scriven, have value also in their contradiction of the assumption that only the causal explanation of events concerns historians. In addition they throw light, he says, on other types of explanation, such as explaining the significance of a certain action. "In explaining the significance of an event (or trend, or condition) - and there are few more common types of explanation in history - we are not trying to show why, given its antecedent conditions, it was to be expected, but rather to show that, given that it happened, it was of a certain importance."[15]

Scriven examines the plausibility of Hempel's analysis of explanation with an example whereby an ink bottle is knocked off a table and ruins the carpet. He says that if one is asked subsequently to explain how the

carpet was damaged, there is a complete explanation. It was damaged by knocking over the ink. He concedes that the truth of this explanation is empirical and in this sense it depends on the laws of nature. But the certainty of the explanation has nothing to do with ability to quote the laws.

If there were a request to produce the role-justifying grounds for the explanation, he says, there could not be produced any true universal hypothesis in which the antecedent avoids such terms as "knock hard enough." The word "probably" would most likely appear too, and one would be left with a truism which could not be denied, but he asks, who would bother to say it? "The simple fact must be faced that certain evidence is adequate to guarantee certain explanations without the benefit of deduction from laws."[16]

Scriven emphasizes the importance in explanation of judgments, the basis of which is the acquired capacity for identifying causes. "The physicist judges, inductively, and from his knowledge and experience, what the explanation is; and the judgment cannot be converted into a deduction. The historian does no less and it would surely be unfair to ask him to do more."[17] (Scriven's view of the importance of judgment in physics is in accord with Toulmin's view of judgment as "part of the art of the sciences, which has to be picked up in the course of the scientist's training.")[18]

Scriven poses the question as to whether the deductive model could be saved by the substitution of probability - statements for universal hypotheses. He concludes that it cannot, for the criterion of deduction must be abandoned if the criterion of universal hypotheses is abandoned. "... and what is then left of the deductive model? We have instead an inductive model of explanation, where for laws we have probability truisms, and for deduction probability inference."[19]

Scriven denies that thereby an improved or more complete kind of explanation, or an ideal model of

explanation is provided. What is to be gained, he asks, by quoting truisms rather than particular and relevant causal judgments? The importance of truisms is that they often form the basis of the historian's principles of judgment and are valuable in the role-justifying dimension of support for an explanation. "The truism tells us nothing new at all; but it says something and it says something true, even if vague and dull. It ill fits into a deductive proof; but it has no need to do so, since the justification of an explanation is a context-dependent inductive procedure (and not necessarily a predictively useful procedure)."[20]

And, as Popper has pointed out, the inductive procedure is not a suitable criterion of demarcation of scientifically objective truth. But, as Scriven stated above, the point of an explanation is to produce understanding, not just knowledge and the feeling of certainty accompanying one's understanding of an explanation has nothing to do with the laws involved in the empirical truth of the explanation. As Popper said, "from the epistemological point of view, it is quite irrelevant whether my feeling of conviction was strong or weak; whether it came from a strong or even irresistible impression of indubitable certainty ... or merely from a doubtful surmise. None of this has any bearing on the question of how scientific statements can be justified."[21]

Finally, Scriven denies that his "explanations" may be construed simply as Hempel's "explanation sketches" and his truisms as loose forms of Hempel's laws. The important distinction, he emphasizes, between explanations of any kind is their certainty; and this, he argues, is quite unconnected with the availability of universal hypotheses, which constitutes Hempel's criterion for judging "explanation-sketches." "If an historical explanation were found which did involve a universal hypothesis, it would not, in the eyes of historians, be any better for that."[22]

The third objection Scriven has to the deductive

model of historical explanation is that laws are not available even in the physical sciences, and, if they were, would not provide explanations of much interest. Explanations in the physical sciences are by no means examples of the deductive model. The laws of physics, he says, are not truisms but informative laws which can be formulated with some precision and enable one to explain hitherto obscure phenomena, but they too require judgment in their application. The laws of nature, he says, are remarkably imperfect instruments and never better than approximations. "Consequently, deduction of the exact values to be explained from such laws is a matter of chance."[23] To say that the explanations in the deductive model are true enough is fatal for Hempel's analysis as the word "enough" immediately lets in the element of judgment, the absence of which had appeared to distinguish physical explanations.

As a more useful distinction than that between explanations in history and those in physical sciences, Scriven proposes a distinction between what he calls "derivation-explanations" and "selection-explanations". This is a distinction between kinds of explanation rather than subject matter. In calling for a derivation-explanation we know the facts and laws, he says, but can't see how they explain. A demonstration of this is required. In the selection-explanation case, on the other hand we know how each of possible sets of circumstances could explain, but we don't know which set applies. The concern is with selecting from the sets the appropriate explanation.

In physics, understanding a phenomenon often requires understanding exactly how its properties can be mathematically derived from certain mathematically expressed physical laws. Physics has a monopoly on derivation-explanations he asserts. But there are also to be found in physics selection-explanations, he claims and scientists "... judge they have the right one; just as the historian does: and the historian's judgment, like the physicist's,

unformalizable, is aided by "empathy".[24]

To sum up: "There is no greater virtue in the explanations in physics than selection-explanations. For the only surplus value of the physical law over the truism lies in the field of prediction of simple quantitative phenomena and not in that of explanation, where the only requirement to be met is attainment of that level of certainty and accuracy which the context requires. And step for step, level for level, the explanations based on truisms can match those based on laws; the extra precision of the latter isn't a working part in the machinery of selection-explanations."[25]

A further objection Scriven has to the deductive model of historical explanation is "... that the logical argument for correlation of good predictions with good explanations is not formally sound and has a limited range of application and little practical significance even in that range; that good predictions are impossible in large areas of the natural and applied sciences where simple quantitative laws and measuring techniques are not available; but that in such areas, as in history, good explanations of the poorly predictable events are commonly available."[26]

Scriven details a cogent rebuttal of the idea that explanations and predictions are complementary in the sense argued by Hempel. ("... an explanation ... is not complete unless it might as well have functioned as a prediction ...")[27] His first point in rebuttal is that no prediction follows at all from non-causal explanations involving explanations of significance or symbolism. Secondly, he says, there are cases where we have a universal hypothesis which can be used for highly reliable prediction, e.g., that the appearance of sunspots is followed by wide-spread radio disturbance. But an explanation of what is predicted does not necessarily follow from our ability to make the prediction. Thirdly, he points out, there are cases such as the occurrence of a severe earthquake, where our inability to predict the event in no way counts against the certainty with which we can explain some of the consequences thereof in terms of the event.

As a fourth serious drawback for the complementarity view, Scriven cites the case where a man has murdered his wife. Only after the deed do we know something about him, he claims, without which we could not make a reliable prediction of the murder: we know he is capable of murder. Thus we have more data for explaining than we had for predicting. Hence, he concludes, the former may be certain and the latter not: but not vice versa. This possibility is easily overlooked in physics, he says, because the increment of information arising from the event's occurrence is usually negligible in comparison with that on which laws are based.

Finally, Scriven reminds us that a prediction is by definition such that it could be given before the event. But if a prediction requires data from the event it could not, logically, be given before it. In this point Scriven discerns a crucial advantage of history constituting a rebuttal of the suggestion that history is incomplete until it has predictively useful laws.

A final objection to the deductive model of historical explanation offered by Scriven is his claim that more illuminating analogues for historical explanation can be found elsewhere than in subsumption under physical laws. Procedures such as "explaining the way," "explaining how something works," and notions such as "dramatic inevitability" are closer to the historian's craft.

The main point of the criterion of dramatic inevitability is, says Scriven, the necessity for "plausibility in depth".[28] In the play, he says, there must not be an inconsistency between an earlier act by a character and a later that cannot be accounted for by the intervening development. In addition, the play must be consistent with what we know or discover of human behaviour. So, too, must historical explanation be plausible in depth, must survive analysis and further discoveries. But no more than the playwright must the historian be able to give the laws of behaviour in order to give a plausible account."[29]

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(iv) The literary analogue more closely examined.

Gallie asserts[1] that explanations are not the main goal and the main hall-marks of achievements in history. He claims that before considering standards of efficacy of historical explanation it is necessary to see clearly the characteristic functions of explanations in history. He maintains that the peculiar and all-important role of explanations in history is that they are essentially aids to the basic capacity or attitudes of following and only in relation to this capacity can they be correctly assessed and construed.

He, too, is critical of the tendency in philosophical literature for historical explanations to be presented as weakened versions of the kind of explanation that is characteristic of the natural sciences. These versions show a persistent neglect of the pragmatic aspect of explanations in history, he claims, - a neglect of the characteristic context within which they occur and the characteristic functions which they are intended to fulfil. The characteristic function of explanations in history is, he says, an ancillary one.

> It is, ... to enable us to follow a narrative when we have got stuck, or to follow again more confidently when we had begun to be confused or bewildered. Hence explanations in history, like the explanations we ask for or volunteer to fellow spectators at a game, are in the nature of intrusions: they are not what we primarily came for - the play, that is the basic thing.[2]

He points out further, that this view implies that every historical narrative is, in a sense, self-explanatory, "until it needs to be 'righted' - as well as logically endorsed - by a helpful explanation."[3] If, in reading a work of history, we follow and consider together a sequence of incidents, each of which severally or all of which conjointly amount to an obviously important necessary condition of some further incident or result, is it not natural to say, he asks, that the resulting incident has been explained - and explained by the very process or build-

up of the narrative itself?

This notion of the historical narrative being self-explanatory is not adequate in Gallie's view as, he claims, no historical narrative is entirely self-explanatory. They all need to be "righted", "to be got back on to the rails again".[4] If a causal sequence or set of necessary conditions falling within an explanation evidently intrude into the course of the narrative with the kind of corrective purpose mentioned above, then, he says, this may be taken as a rule for deciding whether they play an explanatory role in history.

Gallie comments on the disclosures of the rationality of some action which are taken by Dray[5] to be the most important and characteristic of all the kinds of explanation found in history. In his view these disclosures of rationality should not be regarded as explanations at all.

> They simply describe or refer to the fact, which may be perfectly intelligible or self-explanatory in the context, that certain actions are the fulfilments or expressions of already known intentions, plans or policies. Very often we "see" from the context the evident intentionality of an action, or appreciate the sagacity or firmness of some choice or policy, quite as directly as we "feel" the fear or anger of a character in fiction ...[6]

In further support for his argument for the pragmatic nature of historical explanation, Gallie claims that such words as "hence", "thus", "therefore", and "because" when occurring in historical narrative "lack the clarity and fixity of meaning which they possess in formal logic and in the natural sciences."[7] "Very often in an historical narrative a 'therefore' or a 'because' serves simply as an aid to the reader, urging or reminding him to hold together under his attention a succession of incidents which, in fact, need no explanation at all."[8]

The concept of explanation in history as that which ensures that the progress of the narrative is not blocked contrasts with explanations in the sciences. They mark, says Gallie, the "... vital growing points ..."[9] in the sciences.

> It is they that express the kinds of increase of knowledge that we look for from the sciences and they do this because they are in essence answers to problems which challenge scientific men to expand and refine and unify the existing corpus of their laws and theories. But, by contrast, no one expects an historian to be an originator or unifier of the laws and theories which are exemplified in his work.[10]

To replace the deductivist model he proposes that of the philologist's gloss which, he believes, will lead to a positive account of the characteristically historical function of explanations. In the philologist's work, the need to explain arises when there is departure in some marked and important way from the received text and from the interpretation which has traditionally been placed on it. "Similarly with the historian, whenever he departs from the commonly received account of certain famous events, or whenever his interpretation or assessment of events that he is presenting for the first time runs counter to our natural custom-born expectations and habits of judgment."[11]

Gallie answers criticisms of his account of the nature of historical explanation. One objection is that he has trivialised the issue. This objection, he says, is based on the assumption that "any intellectual activity in which scientific or logically complete explanations are accorded a secondary or ancillary role cannot be serious."[12]

His answer is to point out that to de-limit the sphere of relevance of any kind or style of explanation is not to belittle it. "Certainly I would say, we do no dishonour to the genius of scientific explanation by withdrawing the very dubious claims that have been made for it in the field of history."[13]

A second objection points to the claimed inapposite contrast by Gallie of historical explanations in their pragmatic aspect (by stressing the function that they fulfil in historical thinking) with scientific explanations considered in their logical aspect (by stressing, or presuming, their conformity to the deductivist model.) Gallie answers the objection by pointing to a parallelism between scientific and historical explanation from the pragmatic side. He

says that we do find in scientific treatises explanations which have the effect of a gloss. "... scientists do from time to time explain their theories in a sense which, as with historians, comes very close to justifying their continued use after certain adjustments have been made and certain causes of confusion have been cleared away."[14]

From the logical side, he says, there are at least parallel questions in the two cases, in that it can be asked of scientific and historical explanations alike, whether, or to what extent, they conform to the ideal of a statement of necessary and sufficient conditions of a given result.

Further, he says, that the objection under discussion is not really to the purpose in that it springs from a misunderstanding of his thesis. His thesis "is not simply that explanations in history have a pragmatic aspect in respect of which they obviously look very different from scientific explanations considered in their logical aspect: it is that, unless their peculiarity from the pragmatic standpoint is recognised, assessments of the strength of historical explanations from the logical standpoint are liable to involve gross misunderstanding. A proper understanding of the function of explanations in history is a necessary pre-condition of a correct assessment of their adequacy."[15]

But how, a further objection goes, can it be decided whether any explanation in history is logically acceptable or the most logically acceptable of all those that might have been considered in any particular case? This must be answered, he says, via the acceptability of the narrative which the explanation enables the historian to reconstruct or resume. "If the narrative has now been made consistent, plausible, and in accordance with all the evidence, if it is the best narrative that we can get, then the explanation that helped us to get to it is the best explanation as yet available."[16] Unlike scientific explanations, the kind of explanation in history described

by Gallie can neither be tested nor confirmed by its successes with other parallel cases.

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(v) Conclusion.

It appears that the most telling point that can be advanced against the Hempelian deductivist model of explanation is the point that one is most unlikely to find in history books explanations conforming to this pattern. And, indeed, it should be pointed out that Hempel himself is aware of the gap between his model and the explanations historians actually provide. In his revised version, all that the historian provides is an "explanation sketch" (described above).

A further issue emerging from the discussion of Hempel's model is that of the role of the philosopher vis-à-vis history. Should the philosopher approach history with theories to apply? Or should he simply examine what historians do in fact do when they explain? On this issue, Weingartner is quite clear. "The primary role of philosophy is descriptive and not prescriptive."[1]

It could be claimed that the proponents of different views on the nature of historical explanation are further from the topic of their disputes than it at first appears. Weingartner claims that in the matter of the dispute between Hempelians and anti-Hempelians what appears to be a dispute about the precise nature of historical explanation is in fact the product of a disagreement about the nature of philosophic method.

He emphasizes that the Hempelians make no attempt to survey historical explanations as they are actually proffered. He says that the starting point of philosophic reflection in their case is an insight into what an explanation is and "all that follows constitutes a reconstruction and elaboration of that insight in terms of a philosophic position that does not directly depend upon an understanding of the particular thing (historical explanation) being examined, but is grounded in philosophic considerations of a much broader sort."[2]

The Hempelian will not rest with psychological satisfaction achieved by an explanation - the reduction of curiosity to understanding, the resolution of a kind of

tension signaled often by an exclamation such as "Aha!" A philosophic demand is put, says Weingartner, upon explanations - "a demand that the cohesion of its components should not depend upon the background of the person who asks for the explanation, nor upon the context in which it is given, but upon relations which are, so to speak, intrinsic to the explanation."[3] The crucial relationship is, of course, the deducibility of the explanandum from the explanans. The explanation's coherence is then independent of the speaker, the hearer, and the context and meets thereby the criteria, long dominant in philosophy, which any claim to knowledge must meet. The philosopher's model serves as a measure of the historian's success, says Weingartner,and if historical explanations do not live up to the model, it is not the model that is given up as this would mean giving up the philosophic position in which it is grounded.

The basic point of the anti-Hempelians is that the philosopher should not go beyond his data and bring theories of his own. The philosopher's job is to reveal how the term "explanation" is used when used by historians. The anti-Hempelians' stance, says Weingartner, is empirical. And the outcome of his empiricism is confirmation of the fact that the interest, expectations and knowledge of the audience and the intentions of the speaker are part of the context of historical explanations.

The horns of the dilemma would appear to be, on the one hand, a tendency to discredited a priorism and, on the other, a mere reporting developing to a taxonomy. And neither would be deemed the proper business of the philosopher. Weingartner concludes that:

> There is no doubt that the method of the Hempelians involves dangers. When one comes to a problem with theories, the possibility always exists that the analysandum is lost sight of in a network of concepts and principles. Reconstruction, if one does not take heed, may become construction. There is no magic formula for gauging the "distance" the philosopher must stand from the problem of his concern. When that interval shrinks to the vanishing point, philosophy, we have seen, becomes a mere reporting. When, through the interposition of too high a stack of theories,

> the "distance" becomes too great, philosophy relapses into the idle a priorism of ages hopefully gone by. Neither alternative is acceptable. The Anti-Hempelians, however, come close to embracing the former, while the Hempelians are still trying to maintain distance without losing sight of their object.[4]

As the language of history is the language of every-day-use it would seem appropriate, finally, to turn to the dictionary to explain "explain". The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (fifth edition) gives the following as meanings of "explain": "Make known in detail (facts, situation, that, why)", "make intelligible", "account for (conduct etc...)". To the extent that historical explanations carry out any of these practical tasks they can truly be said to explain. An examination of history books will find not one model or logic of explanation, but a miscellany thereof.

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CHAPTER 8: CAUSAL ANALYSIS AND THE ROLE OF GENERALIZATIONS IN HISTORY.

(i) Introduction.

Probably the most important explanatory notion in history is that of causation. But most historians would, no doubt, agree with Renier when he cautions that causation is a methodological tool for the historian and must "moderate the claims it dare make upon the historian's exclusive attention. It can no longer be argued that the historian must make it his primary task to acquire a knowledge of the causes of events or of things. Instead of wondering all the time why events did happen, he can give his attention to the question "what did actually happen?" and this will greatly improve the quality of the story he has to tell."[1]

Nash says that many philosophers doubt whether the notion of cause is applicable in history. Bertrand Russell, he says, felt that the concept of cause is so misleading that the search for causes in science should be abandoned. And one would be inclined to eschew all notion of cause in history as well, if the search for causes necessarily entailed the absurd infinite regress suggested by José Ortega y Gasset:

> ... we can only throw light on yesterday by invoking the day before yesterday; and so with all yesterdays. History is a system, the system of human experiences linked in a single, inexorable chain. Hence nothing can be truly clear in history until everything is clear. We cannot properly understand what this "rationalist" European is unless we know exactly what it was to be a Christian, nor what it was to be a Stoic: and so the process goes on.[2]

In addition, since Hume, Nash points out, philosophers and scientists tend to think of causes only in the sense of "efficient cause" or "invariant succession", and many historians are loath to think of causation in history in this narrow sense. It would be very difficult, however, to avoid the notion of cause when writing history

because, as Michael Scriven has pointed out, "... causal concepts are buried very deep in our language, indeed in our perception."[3] And the search for non-causal language is, he says, reminiscent of the difficult (some would claim impossible) search for pure sense data. The word "cause" may not appear frequently in an historical account but the notion is often embedded in other terms such as "resulted partly from," "forced", "entailed", "led to," "made possible by", etc.

Nash cites[4] Aristotle as distinguishing four types of cause (material, formal, efficient, and final). He says that the last three may be relevant to history.

He defines an efficient cause in history thus:

" 'C was the efficient cause of E' means that 'C was the set of events and conditions prior to the occurrence of E sufficient for the occurrence of E'."[5]

He defines a <u>formal cause</u> thus: that " 'C was the formal cause of E' means that 'C was a dispositional property or set of dispositional properties necessary for the occurrence of E'."[6]

He defines a <u>final cause</u> thus:

" 'G was the final cause of E' means that 'The agent who did C desired end or goal G and believed that doing C would help him attain G'."[7]

With reference to Lincoln's murder, a bullet in the head is an example of the first-mentioned type of cause; the hatred of Southerners for Lincoln, is an example of the second; and the desire of Southerners to obtain better treatment for the defeated Confederacy and the belief that this could be brought about by his murder is an example of the third.

Positivist philosophers like Hempel who accept the "covering law model" believe that only one of these senses of cause, that of efficient cause, is applicable in history. An objection to Hempel's view of cause is that it may explain what happens in <u>kinds</u> of circumstances but it cannot explain what happens in particular instances.

Nash says that many idealists have suggested that

instead of trying to impose some philosophical theory of causation on history, philosophers ought to pay more attention to how historians actually employ the concept of cause.

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6. ibid., p. 230.
7. ibid.

(ii) Gardiner's Analysis of Cause in History.

Gardiner points out[1] that "cause" and "effect" as used in daily life do not possess the precision that some may attempt to apply in other fields. He insists that the "... analysis of the causal concept must be appropriate to the level of language upon which we are speaking. The idea of causality is a function of a given language, requiring adjustment according to the particular level of language upon which it is used."[2]

He agrees that on certain levels the nature of the correlations involved make the use of causality practically impossible. He quotes Russell as saying that "... the reason why physics has ceased to look for causes is that, in fact, there are no such things."[3] He disagrees with Russell, however, because "... not all empirical inquiries have attained to the structure of physics, and not all terminologies exclude the possibility of speaking causally."[4]

What is to be called the "cause" of an event in a given instance is, he says, a question to be decided in terms of the field of inquiry involved, and of the interests and purposes of the speaker. There is no conflict between the common sense view that an attack of pneumonia was caused by standing too long in the cold and the medical scientists' view that it was caused by the presence of pneumococci and the factor of the physical condition of the patient. The word "cause" he says, is merely being used differently in the two cases.

For common sense, he points out further, the cause of an event is frequently conceived of as being a kind of handle, an instrument for achieving an end that we desire. The condition chosen as the "cause" of an event may only be one among many conditions that were also relevant. What we choose to regard as the cause of an event is largely, he says, dependent upon its practical value.

The metaphorical conception of cause as a kind of handle could lead, however, to the kind of confusion Gardiner claims is inherent in Taine's maxim: "Après la

collection des faits, la recherche des causes." This suggests,[5] says Gardiner, that the finding out what happened and the finding out why it happened are two distinct procedures. He claims that this is not the case. "It is incorrect to speak of 'finding out the facts' as if it were a process separate from, and prior to, the discovery of causal relations: there is what may be called a procedural interconnexion between the two."[6] Taine, he asserts, made a confusion between facts and evidence.

In examining the role of generalizations in the causal connexions asserted by historians relating one event to another, Gardiner insists that our knowledge of causal connexions is dependent upon our having observed a regularity in the concurrence of two events. The analysis of causal connexions in history in terms of regularity is a feature shared in common with scientific and common-sense types of explanation. He agrees with Karl Popper whom he quotes as saying:

> ... we can never speak of cause and effect in an absolute way, but ... an event is a cause of another event ... relative to some universal law. However these universal laws are very often so trivial ... that as a rule we take them for granted, instead of making conscious use of them ... If we explain, for example, the first division of Poland in 1772 by pointing out that it could not possibly resist the combined power of Russia, Prussia and Austria, then we are tacitly using some trivial universal law such as: "If of two armies which are about equally well-armed and led, one has a tremendous superiority in men, then the other never wins." Such a law might be described as a law of the sociology of military power; but it is too trivial ever to raise a serious problem for students of sociology or to arouse their attention. [7]

Gardiner feels, however, that "there is a 'scientific tone' about his treatment of the problem that is open to qualification on the grounds that, as it stands, it may suggest an artificial picture of what the historian is doing, an over-simplified, too tidy account."[8]

In the case of a desire to explain why Louis XIV died unpopular it might be proposed that Louis XIV

represented a case of the law. "Rulers are unpopular whenever their policies prove detrimental to the fortunes of their countries," and that the explanation in question was deduced from the law taken together with circumstances of the case.

Gardiner conceives of the historian objecting to this interpretation in terms such as the following. Historians do not deal with repeatable cases and the assumption that the case of Louis XIV is a case of a certain specified type is unconvincing. The generalizations used by historians are not scientific laws. The unpopularity of Louis XIV is not a confirmatory instance of an historical law or of any general hypothesis at all but the outcome of a particular complex of factors.

The historian, says Gardiner, may believe that a generalization, such as "economic changes are accompanied by religious changes," has a bearing upon the problem of the Protestant Reformation. But he would not regard it as applicable in the way the chemist might see the law of chemical change as applicable. The chemist has definite procedures to determine the applicability or nonapplicability of the law to a particular case. It can be decided with confidence whether the chemical is of a given type and whether the experiment is conducted under "normal" conditions.

Generalizations in so far as they are enunciated by historians he sees as being of an essentially loose, "porous" nature. They do not expect them to be interpreted with any degree of strictness. They may be described, he continues, as "throwing light upon" a particular problem, as providing bearings or markers. There is a wide and indefinite ceteris paribus clause presupposed by their formulation and it is not implied that they always hold.

As stated above, Gardiner considers that it is important to consider the context of the interests and purposes of the person ascribing causal properties to an event; and especially so, if "cause" is modified by an

adjective. He examines what is meant when something is said to be the "root" or "real" or "most important" cause of an event. One of the purposes of qualification of causes thus is to contrast one of the conditions deemed a cause with other conditions for some particular reason. Gardiner believes it is an incorrect interpretation of historical explanations of the "root cause" type to hold that somehow real causes have some mysterious property of "realness" stamped on them. Analysis of "real" causes reveal not special properties but the point of view of the historian and the level of generality upon which he is speaking.

The journalist may see the origin of World War I as lying in the Sarajevo assassination because his viewpoint is limited to the period of intense diplomatic activity that led up to the outbreak of hostilities. The "real" cause of the War may be seen variously on the level of individual human purposes, national policies and traditions, political alignments and treaties or on the level of economic trends, social organization or ideology.

Gardiner asks whether the question: "what were the real causes of the World War I?" is to be interpreted as a request for information concerning why it broke out on August the fourth, 1914 or whether it is to be interpreted as a request for information on the conditions that made it likely a war would break out early in the twentieth century. "It is part of the function of expressions like "real cause" to make it clear upon what level the question is being answered and how, for example, the words "the First World War" are being interpreted."[9]

He points out that apparently insoluble problems may arise because of the indefiniteness of the questions asked, because they occur without reference to any particular context or to any rules according to which an answer may be provided. Gardiner claims that philosophers have been misled by ambiguities hidden in the word "cause" which have led them to believe that somewhere in every historical situation there is present a factor of a

certain type and that once this factor is pin-pointed, everything else can be seen to follow from it. This belief he says is an illusion. "The historical process is not like a machine that has to be kept in motion by a metaphysical dynamo behind the scenes. And there are no absolute Real Causes waiting to be discovered by historians with sufficiently powerful magnifying glasses."[10]

It is interesting to note here Nagel's claim[11] that the qualification of causes derives from the historian's difficulty in achieving the explanatory ideal of ascertaining the necessary and sufficient conditions for the occurrence of phenomena. This ideal is rarely achieved, and he claims that even in the best-developed sciences it is often an open question whether the conditions mentioned in an explanation are, indeed, sufficient.

Historical inquiry is further removed from the ideal, he says, since the full circumstances are often quite complex and numerous and usually not known. For this reason historians usually describe causal factors as the "main", "primary", "principal", "chief", or "most important". Their ignorance, he says, can be covered by the convenient phrase, "other things being equal."

The historical practice of "weighting" causal factors in respect to their "degree of importance" differs from practice in the natural sciences, which, he says, do not appear to require the imputation of relative importance to the causal variables that occur in their explanations. Indeed, the practice of "weighting" causal factors is often dismissed as arbitrary and meaningless because no verifiable sense can be attached to such characterizations as "chief" or "most important" in connection with causal factors. Nagel admits that most historians do not appear to associate any definite meaning with their statements of relative importance and that these statements often have only a rhetorical intent. He believes, however, that it is desirable to make

explicit what it is that these statements are intended to convey.

J. H. Hexter, when adumbrating[12] in a broad way what history is, characterized firstly the human past as whatever happened to happen to people; whatever they intended; and whatever they have happened to do up to now. History, he says, is an attempt to render a coherent, intelligible and true account of some of these events, intentions and happenings. He points out that this means the exclusion of all the past and all natural history before the coming of man on earth. The main reason for this is that the human past has certain traits wholly absent from the past of pre-human nature, such as the fact that man alone leaves records that he intends as records.

Emphasis in history is on what human beings have done. It is only natural, then, that historians, in many of their explanations, make reference to the desires, thoughts, plans and policies of the people in whom they are interested. It makes nonsense to speak of natural phenomena being motivated or having desires. The desires, motives, plans, policies, intentions and thoughts of human beings comprise the subject of Gardiner's examination of the problem of "mentalcausation".

A crucial distinction between history and natural science was stated thus by Collingwood:

> When a scientist asks "Why did that piece of litmus paper turn pink?" he means "On what kinds of occasions do pieces of litmus paper turn pink?" When an historian asks "Why did Brutus stab Caesar?" he means "What did Brutus think which made him decide to stab Caesar?" The cause of the event, for him, means the thought in the mind of the person by whose agency the event came about ...[13]

Given that this distinction is correct, Gardiner sees the philosopher of history as presented with a twofold problem (a) of describing in what, precisely, consists this special form of causation and (b) of showing in what sense the historian can be said to know what in a particular case, caused an historical figure to act as he did.

One theory is that to talk about a motive or intention is to talk about an entity of a non-physical or mental kind which gives an agent the necessary push that makes him act. In the case of ordinary cause - effect inference one is confronted with events that are in principle observable and known in this way. But it is nonsense to say that a person's motives can be observed.

One suggestion is that our knowledge of motives can be justified on analogy with our own experience. Gardiner says that this is unpalatable to the theorists who insist that historical thinking is unlike the procedure of natural scientists since it opens the door to an interpretation of historical explanation in terms of regularities or laws - in this case between "mental events" and physical actions.

The alternative is that knowledge can be obtained by having the same thought as another person. Gardiner quotes Collingwood in support of this view-point: "Yet if I not only read his argument but understand it... the process of argument which I go through is not a process resembling Plato's, it actually is Plato's .."[14] Why somebody did something can be known just as directly as what it was that was done.

Gardiner says that the main force of what has been called the "inside-outside theory" of human action is the claim that it consists of both the physical movements and the thought they express, not certain physical movements from which the motive behind it is inferred. According to this definition, he says, it makes nonsense to speak of inferring the motive from the action; for part of what we mean by the action is the motive. When an historian is said to understand an action he is aware of two inseparably connected goings-on - the physical movements and the thoughts they express. He is made aware of the former by his own eyesight either directly or through reports; he is made aware of the latter in ways variously described as "rethinking them within his own mind" or "recreating the experience of the agent."

Gardiner recognises that this account contradicts the premises from which it started in that motives were seen as the causes of a person's actions. If "motives" are "insides" in some sense of an event it is difficult, he says, to see how a cause could ever be termed the "inside" of the event which constitutes its effect.

Nevertheless an attraction of the account is seen in its compromise, on the one hand, between the various reasons which incline us to say that motives are not like causes and, on the other, the reasons which incline us to say that motives are like causes. In addition, he points out, the account appears to be in accordance with that experience of the historian where he seeks to enter into sympathetic understanding with a personality or period.

Gardiner examines what it means to give an explanation of somebody's action in terms of what he wants, intends or plans. He sees it as an important task of the philosopher to prevent philosophical confusions by underlining metaphors such as those where people are said to be "governed by certain desires", "driven by certain impulses" "fighting their temptations" and "searching their consciences" and by pointing to their logical limits. For an historian to examine the claim that Napoleon's actions were governed by a will to power is, in fact, says Gardiner, to ask questions of a very different kind from the kind of questions that would be asked in order to determine whether an engine was driven by steam.

As a second example Gardiner considers the sentence "Richelieu's policy was guided throughout by his aim to establish a centralized French monarchy". He says that there is a temptation to substantialize the aim and to assimilate it to cases of physical transactions and suppose that an aim guides a man in the same way as dogs guide men. Such a supposition, he says, is absurd.

In seeking a correct analysis of the sentence about Richelieu Gardiner says that, even if one discards the belief that some kind of continuous mental process is

involved shadowing Richelieu through his career, there still is a mental act or event involved. This could have been a proposition formulated by Richelieu either in his head or on paper. But it appears to Gardiner to be far from clear that when we refer to a person's having an aim or intention we always mean simply and solely that the aim or intention in question was, or might have been, stated; still less that the pronouncement caused all the subsequent actions.

In opposition to those who maintain that words like "aims" function as names of causal processes Gardiner suggests that to say that a man's actions are guided by such-and-such an intention or aim is to make a statement of varying degrees of complexity about him and not about him plus the intentions or aims which influence him. He quotes L. S. Stebbing in support of this:

> ... motives are thought to compel me. The duality is strangely persistent in our thinking. It is responsible for the wholly unwarrantable separation of the self from its acts, of the motive from the act, of the act from the choice, and of the decision from the thing done ... We speak of ourself as enslaved to our passions and then as constrained by our motives. We go on to ask what compels the motive ... [15]

As Gilbert Ryle has argued in The Concept of Mind the doctrine of the ghost in the machine is not true. Motives, he says, are neither experiences nor the sorts of things which could be among the direct intimations of consciousness or among the objects of introspection. There are no occult or ghostly causes of actions; "... to explain an action as done from a specified motive or inclination is not to describe the action as the effect of a specified cause. Motives are not happenings and are not therefore of the right type to be causes."[16]

In Ryle's view, to explain an action as done from a certain motive is to subsume it under a propensity or behaviour-trend the evidence for which is the observation or recollection of present and past deeds, thoughts and

actions. "The imputation of a motive for a particular action is not a causal inference to an unwitnessed event but the subsumption of an episode proposition under a law-like proposition."[17] He points out further, that it is analogous to the explanation of the fracture of glass by reference to its brittleness - the dispositional quality of glass. To describe glass as brittle, he says, is to assert a general hypothetical proposition about glass. And to explain the breaking of glass in terms of its brittleness is to state a law-like proposition. It is to be contrasted with the reporting of a cause or of an event as would be the case if the breaking of the glass were explained by saying that a stone hit it. This event would stand to the breaking of the glass as cause to effect.

References

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3. ibid., p. 8.
4. ibid., p. 10.
5. P. Gardiner, op. cit., Part III, "Causal Connexion in History", p. 78.
6. ibid.
7. ibid., p. 88.
8. ibid.
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10. ibid., p. 109.
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12. J. H. Hexter, The History Primer, (Basic Books, London, 1972), p. 60.
13. R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 214-215.
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16. G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, (Penguin Books 1973)p.109.
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CHAPTER 9: HISTORICAL OBJECTIVITY, RELATIVISM, SELECTION AND INTERPRETATION.

(i) Introduction.

To what extent can historians legitimately claim the status of objective truth for the conclusions they reach? Is it possible for historians to reconstruct the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen",[1] as Ranke urged? Is it the case "that the historian cannot eliminate the personal equation"[2] as Carl Becker put it? Do selection and interpretation necessarily imply subjectivity and the impossibility of avoiding value judgements? These are some of the questions. But it appears that there are no clear-cut answers compelling universal assent.

As Cohen pointed out,[3] scepticism is supported by the argument that each age develops new conceptions of the essence of history and that even within any age different authorities give conflicting accounts of what happened in a given locality and period. The historian's fragmentary evidence of physical objects and documents from the past cannot be conclusive. Those who wrote the records cannot be crossexamined as to how much of what they wrote was based on direct and competent observation, what part on hearsay, and what was just their guess or imaginative construction. It would be too easy and simplistic to build a case for historical relativism along these lines and Cohen stresses the importance of getting rid of the hasty and facile dogma that everything is relevant to everything else.

Arendt disputes[4] the validity of the frequently cited ideal of scientific objectivity. She claims that the nineteenth century opposition of the natural and historical sciences, together with the allegedly absolute objectivity and precision of the natural scientists, is today a thing of the past. She says that the natural sciences now admit that with the experiment and testing natural processes under prescribed conditions, the observer, in watching the experiment, becomes one of its conditions, and a "subjective" factor is introduced into

the "objective" processes of nature.

Using Galileo's words she describes the experiment as "being a question put before nature"[5] and says that "... the answers of science will always remain replies to questions asked by men ..."[6] The confusion in the issue of "objectivity" she says, "... was to assume that there could be answers without questions and results independent of a question-asking being."[7] "Physics, we know today, is no less a man-centered inquiry into what is than historical research. The old quarrel therefore, between the 'subjectivity' of physics has lost much of its relevance."[8]

She asserts that every selection of material in a sense interferes with history, and all criteria for selection put the historical course of events under certain man-made conditions, which are quite similar to the conditions the natural scientist prescribes to natural processes in the experiment.

The problem of scientific objectivity as the nineteenth century posed it has led, she claims, to "... the real issue at stake, the issue if impartiality ..."[9] becoming difficult to recognize. She says that "... Impartiality and with it all true historiography, came into the world when Homer decided to sing the deeds of the Trojans no less than those of the Achaeans, and to praise the glory of Hector no less than the greatness of Achilles."[10]

She claims that what has obscured the modern discussion of objectivity in the historical sciences and prevented its ever touching the fundamental issue involved seems to be the fact that none of the conditions of Homeric impartiality are present in the modern age. Homeric impartiality rested upon the assumption, she says, that "great things are self-evident, shine by themselves; ..."[11] Contrasted with this self-evident existence of great things, "... the birth of the modern idea of history ... coincides with ... the modern age's doubt of the reality of an outer world 'objectively' given to human perception as an unchanged and unchangeable object."[12] Hallmarks of the modern age are what she terms

a "world- alienation of man"[13] and a subjectivization where emphasis is on "sensation qua sensation as more 'real' than the 'sensed' object and, at any rate, the only safe ground of experience."[14]

If great things are not self-evident and able to shine by themselves, it is certainly not likely to be the case that countless historical facts will display these attributes. The facts do not speak for themselves. If the past is to be known, it must be reconstructed. A. I. Melden countered the idea of the fact as a raw datum to be apprehended in all its "objectivity" by means of passive observation thus:

> Progress in empirical inquiry does not occur when minds that are freed of all prepossessions are exposed to the stimulus of fact in order that they may be led by some homing instinct to the truth. Facts do not announce their own existence, and, even if they did, they do not come labelled with their varying degrees of importance. For history, as written, is no mere catalogue, arranged in chronological order, of past events. Even if such a catalogue existed it would not interest us; it would explain nothing because it included everything. The historian is concerned to explain; he must, if he consults the facts, be led to the facts by the hypotheses in mind, the information at hand, selecting these on the basis of his antecedent knowledge for their presumed importance and exploring in the limited manner possible for him the adequacy of his hypotheses. [15]

Critics of the case for historical relativism claim that the denial of historical objectivity implies that all history may be reduced to the level of mere propaganda and the historian transformed into a passive instrument of the Zeitgeist. Tholfsen claims[16] for relativism, however, a positive and useful function in helping in the destruction of the theory of scientific history and in preparing for the recognition of some degree of relativity and subjectivity of historical knowledge. It has become recognized that the "facts" in history are different and cannot be established with the precision possible in the natural sciences. And they are not susceptible of analysis according to fixed and universally accepted procedures, as in geology.

The word "subjective" no longer holds the same terror, says Tholfsen, that it did for the theorists of scientific history for whom " 'objectivity' was the salient characteristic of knowledge as such; and 'subjectivity' was the chief obstacle."[17] It is recognized today, he says, that "the values and experience of the knowing subject are not 'subjective' obstacles to be overcome, but indispensable tools for the study of the past".[18] The historian must use all the faculties of his mind and spirit in order to understand the past.

This does not mean that the word "objectivity" has no place in history. It has, but the "objectivity" that obtains in geology is irrelevant to history. Tholfsen sees the "limited" "objectivity" attained by the historian as a moral and intellectual achievement. The historian must not, he says, permit his understanding to be coloured by his own moral or political principles or "permit his intellectual presuppositions to affect his sense of reality; he must not latch on to evidence that confirms his theories while scanting evidence to the contrary."[19] The historian requires both an ability to perceive his presuppositions and values and their effect on his thought and the will to criticize his cherished ideas and to resist them where necessary.

Tholfsen claims that precisely because the relativists stated the problem of historical knowledge so well, the historian has been in a better position ever since to achieve knowledge that is "objective" in a sense appropriate to the subject matter. That is, he continues, the historian can claim that his work is "objective" in the sense that it can stand up to criticism; that it can compete effectively with alternative accounts; and it represents a genuine effort to see the past as it really was.

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3. M. R. Cohen, The Meaning of Human History (The Open Court Publishing Company 1961), Ch. 1.
4. Arendt, op. cit., p. 48.
5. ibid., p. 49.
6. ibid.
7. ibid.
8. ibid.
9. ibid., p. 51.
10. ibid.
11. ibid., p. 52.
12. ibid., p. 53.
13. ibid.
14. ibid.
15. A. I. Melden, "Historical Objectivity, A "Noble Dream"? " in R. H. Nash, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 193.
16. T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p. 221.
17. ibid., p. 225.
18. ibid.
19. ibid., p. 226.

(ii) The Problem of Selection.

The selectivity of history, the historian's choice of period or perspective, is sometimes made the occasion for wholesale skepticism concerning the possibility of "objective" explanations in historical matters. Both Dray and Nagel challenge the arguments which impugn the possibility of objectivity in history on grounds of this kind. Dray says[1] that in some sense or other, all enquiries, including physical science, are selective. But he claims that it can be shown that the historian's problem of selection is significantly different from that of the generalizing sciences.

In considering this he makes a distinction between the selection of a problem for study and the selection of what is offered as its solution. He claims that when it is asked whether historical enquiry is value free the concern is surely not with the variability arising from the asking of different questions.

> For if different histories are written in answer to different questions, the different evaluations of the historian will be ingredient, not in the enquiry itself, but in the choice of the enquiry. It is when historians give different answers to the same questions that the problem of objectivity within the enquiry arises. And it is only with respect to this that we should seek a contrast with allegedly "objective" types of enquiry - since they also require us to choose our questions.[2]

He acknowledges that historians do give different answers to the same questions and claims that they do this in circumstances where the difference between them is attributable to a difference of value judgment. In support of this contention he draws a distinction between two kinds of historical writing, the explanatory and the descriptive. He draws this distinction because he sees the problem of selecting answers or solutions as arising in a different way in each. A further reason, he states, for drawing the distinction is that, if there is a case for saying that historians ought not to allow their value judgments to affect the answering of their questions, that case seems

to be limited to histories of the explanatory sort.

He sees the possibility of a non-evaluative criterion of selection for explanatory histories if historians accepted the positivist theory of explanation whereby the ideal is the outlining of a set of conditions sufficient for explanation. If this theory is accepted, he claims that disagreements about what is to be included in an explanatory account cannot legitimately have anything to do with the different values or interests of the historians concerned. "For the issue will simply be whether what each historian includes was really among those conditions which together constituted the sufficient set. And this, it will be said, is a question to be settled by reference to appropriate general knowledge about the subject matter."[3]

Judgments may be involved here, but they will not be value judgments. He says that a non-evaluative criterion of selection cannot be provided in similar fashion in the case of descriptive histories. In explanatory history, despite practical difficulties, the notion of offering explanation by outlining sets of jointly sufficient conditions does at least offer, he says, an ideal of objective selection which could conceivably be realized. He claims that in descriptive history there is no corresponding ideal short of the notion of a complete description, which is, in principle, impossible to give.

Nagel says[4] that some writers see the historian as inescapably concerned with "value-impregnated" subject matter. He counters that the only basis for this claim lies in an arbitrary redefinition of the word "history" so as to conform with the claim. Even when a historian's subject matter is admittedly value-impregnated it by no means follows he says, that he must himself share or judge the passions or value inherent therein.

> It is an obvious blunder to suppose that only a fat cowherd can drive fat kine. It is an equally crude error to maintain one cannot inquire into the conditions and consequences of values and evaluations without necessarily engaging in moral or aesthetic value judgments. [5]

The view that historical inquiry inevitably leads to a distorting of the facts because it is addressed to limited selected problems does not distinguish the historian, in Nagel's opinion, from other scientists. The assumption of the aforementioned view is that one cannot have competent knowledge of anything unless one knows everything, and this is, he says, a corollary to the philosophic doctrine of the "internality" of all relations. If the doctrine were sound, he says, and every historical account deemed necessarily distorted, a similar valuation would have to be put on all science and analytical discourse.

A further argument for skepticism concerning the possibility of objectively warranted explanations in human history is that based on the influence on any inquiry of personal and social bias. According to some sociologists "... when thinking is directed to human affairs, the interpretation of observed facts, the selection of problems for inquiry and the methods employed for resolving them, and the standards of validity accepted are all functions of the thinker's unconscious value commitments and world outlook, his social position, and his political and class loyalties."[6]

Nagel concedes that no inquiry takes place in an intellectual vacuum but will not allow that it follows from this that acceptance of one conclusion rather than another is inevitably influenced by conscious or unconscious value commitments associated with social status. It is undoubtedly the case that the conclusions one accepts are frequently influenced by one's general world perspectives. Nagel claims, however, that the very fact that biased thinking may be detected and its sources investigated shows that the case for objective explanations in history is not necessarily hopeless. The assertion that bias is exhibited assumes a distinction between biased and unbiased thinking and that the bias can be identified. The consequence is, says Nagel, that it is possible to correct the bias and to obtain conclusions in

better agreement with the evidence.

Nagel considers also the argument "that the social perspective of a student of human affairs is not only causally influential upon his inquiry, but is logically involved both in his standards of validity as well as in the meaning of his statements."[7] It is alleged that those sharing the same social perspective and employing the same conceptual and categorical apparatus will arrive at similar conclusions on any problem when the standards characteristic of their common perspective are correctly applied.

Nagel asks what is the logical status of this very claim. If the claim is meaningful and valid only for those occupying a certain social status, its validity is narrowly self-limited and must be dismissed as irrelevant by others with a different social perspective. If the claim is exempt from what it asserts, so that its meaning and truth are not logically dependent upon the social status of those who assert it then there is at least one conclusion about human affairs, he says, that is objectively valid. Further, if there is one such conclusion, there is no clear reason why there may not be others.

References

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2. ibid., pp. 217-218.
3. ibid., pp. 218-219.
4. E. Nagel, "Some Issues in the Logic of Historical Analysis" in Gardiner, Theories of History, p. 377.
5. ibid.
6. ibid., p. 379.
7. ibid., p. 380.

(iii) The Problem of Interpretation.

The existence of conflicting historical interpretations which appear to be concerned with the same historical period or set of facts is often put forward in support of irrefragable relativism.

In their narratives historians may ascribe to a set of events what Danto[1] calls pragmatic, theoretical, consequential or revelatory significance.

A narrative with pragmatic significance is history explicitly constructed to serve a moralistic purpose. He cites the example of Tacitus who chose to write of Germany, stressing the virtuousness of the Germans, in order to point an invidious contrast with the behaviour of his own countrymen.

A set of happenings have theoretical significance when those happenings are seen by the historian as "standing in an evidential or illustrative relationship to some general theory he is concerned to establish or disestablish."[2] As an example, he cites narratives concerning French history written by Marx which serve to illustrate a general theory of class struggle.

Of consequential significance Danto says that an "event E may be said to be significant to some historian H when E has certain consequences to which H attaches some importance."[3] An example of this is the significance attributed to the Black Death in that it created a sellers' market in labour leading to a rise in wages contributing to the break-up of the feudal structure of tied labour.

A set of events could be said to have revelatory significance if, on the basis of them, an historian is able to postulate a story leading to the reconstruction or the inference of the occurrence of some other set of events.

Frankel examines[4] the nature and logic of what is called "interpreting" history and its relationship to historical explanation. He points out that over and above the "explanations" a historian gives, it is held that he cannot help providing an "interpretation" of the

events which affects the actual "explanations". This element of interpretation, governed by the historian's values, not only controls the choosing and delimiting of the story he tells, but also, it appears, the actual imputation of causal connections.

> ... when causal imputations between an event C and another event E are made ... they are [often] made by tacitly setting aside factors which are necessary for the occurrence of that event, but which are regarded as fixed or unmanipulable, from another set of factors, which are or were allegedly subject to change or control, and which are designated as the "causes" of that event. Accordingly, the assertion of a causal relation in practical affairs or in history frequently rests either on an assumption of fact or a stipulation of value. Either certain variables are assumed, in fact, to have been unmanipulable; or it is tacitly stipulated that certain variables should not be manipulated. And when this latter sort of stipulation enters, an element of interpretation seems to be present in the actual content of the historian's causal explanations.[5]

Frankel notes three characteristic ways in which reference is made to an "interpretation of history." (1) Some variable such as economics, geography, or technology may be asserted as the most important causal agency in history. (2) The meaning or purpose of history as a whole may be stated in which all historical occurrences are shown to subserve some final goal or ideal. (3) The "meaning" or "function" of a given historical sequence or set of institutions may be given.

The first kind of interpretations has value, he says, if the interpretations proposed are seen not as attempts to formulate a finished theory but as guides to research. The second kind cannot be supported by evidence yielded by ordinary empirical methods. In addition, Frankel points out, a law predicting the overall direction in which a system as a whole must move can only apply to an isolated system and historical sequences plainly do not fall into this class.

In the third kind of interpretation the historian is telling a story of a sequence of causally related events

leading to what Frankel calls "terminal consequences," to state which, is to state the "meaning" of an historical process. The question of the choice of terminal consequences, is the one, he claims that raises most of the issues concerning the possibility of objectivity in history.

Two historians may legitimately choose different terminal consequences in interpreting the same general period of history and the interpretations may not be offering two accounts of the same facts but accounts of different facts. Both interpretations can be equally true and objective, he claims. "Interpretations of history sometimes seem to clash because they are employed as instruments in a practical conflict of interests; but from the point of view of the facts they may not be in conflict at all, since they talk about different facts."[7]

Failure to see this elementary point he sees as the source of much of the skepticism about the possibility of objectivity in the writing of history. It is false to say that histories written in any particular age can be true only for that age and not for another. "... when the historians of a later age write history in terms of terminal consequences that are different from those with which their predecessors were concerned, they are not re-writing history, they are writing another history."[8]

In considering what enters into the choice of terminal consequences and the standards, if any, by which comparative judgments among such choices may be made, he notes as a first element the simple one of interestingness. But this does not imply necessarily history according to capricious interests or the evanescent values of a small coterie or local prejudice or passing fashion. To be preferred is the historian who makes his selections in terms of widely shared interests and "values of a more durable sort which express the deeper, long-standing commitments of a larger civilization."[9]

The second consideration noted by Frankel to enter into the choice of terminal consequences is a concern with

those which have the greatest explanatory value - those which may be treated themselves as causes of other events, as the beginnings of other histories.

A third consideration he discerns is the selection of certain consequences because they are held tacitly or explicitly, to be the key variables in the formulation and implementation of an effective social policy in which the variables can and should be manipulated. As examples he cites (1) the historians who make the rise of science their central concern because they are convinced that science is the key social instrument that has to be understood and employed if modern society is to solve its problems and (2) Marx and his belief that only the industrial proletariat had the power and interest to do what was needed to organize an industrial society effectively.

Frankel concludes that: "Despite the fact that interpretations of history frequently enter into the actual explanations that are offered by historians, the writing of history is not condemned to be a battleground for irreconcilable points of view. Nor do we have to remain content with an uncritical pluralism which simply asserts that history may be read from many points of view, and that each man may choose his own."[10]

References

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2. ibid., p. 133.
3. ibid., p. 134.
4. In C. Frankel, "Explanation and Interpretation in History" in Gardiner, Theories of History, pp.408-427.
5. ibid., p. 418.
6. ibid., p. 421.
7. ibid.
8. ibid.
9. ibid., p. 422.
10. ibid., p. 424.

(iv) Conclusion.

In the light of the apparent demolition of the positivist ideal of scientific objectivity it may be asked what alternative there is for the historian who is not satisfied with objectivity in the "weakened or secondary sense" as proposed by Tholfsen and who cannot reconcile himself to the recognition of a plurality, "critical" or "uncritical", of different histories written from different points of view.

Walsh considers[1] the question as to whether there is hope for the ultimate attainment of a single historical point of view, a set of presuppositions all historians might be prepared to accept. If this were possible, the problem of objectivity in history would be solved by the development of an historical "consciousness in general", a standard way of thinking about the subject matter of history. For this, he says, there would be needed, not only standard knowledge of how people do behave but also agreement about how they ought to behave.

Many philosophers would claim, however, that to provide a standard set of moral and metaphysical ideas is impossible as they spring from non-rational attitudes. As Leszek Kolakowski[2] outlined the viewpoint, ultimate, evaluative assumptions can only be arbitrary. There can be, he says, a scientific sociology of manners and customs, a history of ethical theories and a psychology of morals, but not a scientific normative ethics whereby we can be told how we ought to behave. No science can sanction anything as "good" or condemn anything as "evil".

A. J. Ayer argued in Language, Truth and Logic that normative ethical concepts are irreducible to empirical concepts which leaves the way clear for the "absolutist" view of ethics according to which, statements of value are controlled by "a mysterious intellectual intuition".[3] This theory, he says, makes statements of value unverifiable, for what may be intuitively certain to one person may be doubtful or false, to another.

"... a mere appeal to intuition is worthless as a test of a proposition's validity."[4]

According to Ayer, the correct treatment of ethical statements is to take them as being unanalysable. Ethical concepts, he says, are pseudo-concepts and "the presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content".[5] The function of ethical words is purely emotive. They serve to express feeling or to arouse feeling and sentences which simply express moral judgements do not say anything, he claims, and do not come under the category of truth and falsehood. "They are unverifiable for the same reason as a cry of pain or a word of command is unverifiable - because they do not express genuine propositions."[6]

Ayer dismisses metaphysical assertions as nonsensical, as having no literal meaning and subject consequently to no criteria of truth or falsehood.

References

1. Walsh, op. cit., Ch. 5, p. 114 ff.
2. Leszek Kolakowski, Positivist Philosophy (Pelican Books, 1972), p. 224.
3. A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, (Pelican Books, 1972), p. 140.
4. ibid., p. 141.
5. ibid., p. 142.
6. ibid., p. 144.

CHAPTER 10: METHODOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM AND METHODOLOGICAL SOCIALISM.

(i) Introduction.

Is history something that men make, or are the moving agents of history certain superhuman or super-organic entities or forces? An examination of historical sentences as Danto points out[1] reveals that many employ as grammatical subjects, proper names or definite descriptions of individual human beings who actually existed. Yet, individual human beings are not the only individuals directly referred to by the subjects of historical sentences. There are what Danto terms "social individuals,"[2] examples of which might be, he says, social classes, national groups, religious organizations, large-scale events or large-scale social movements.

Is the historian who employs "social individuals" in his sentences giving an implicit answer to the question above? Or is he merely using in all innocence a well-accepted device for stylistic reasons in the cause of communication and narrative economy?

Most historians would deny the former question and answer the latter in the affirmative. Yet, many philosophers and historians regard with mistrust, Danto says, the kind of sentence employing "social individuals." They are reluctant to concede, he says, "that the social world is made up of individual human beings and other, super-human individuals which, though they may be said to contain human beings amongst their parts none the less are not wholly to be identified with these parts, and which enjoy, so to speak, a life of their own."[3]

In general they would subscribe to the position of methodological individualism which holds, according to Danto's description:

> (a) that sentences about social individuals are logically independent of sentences about individual human beings;
> (b) that social individuals are ontologically distinct from individual human beings;

(c) that social individuals are causally dependent on the behaviour of individual human beings and not the other way about;

(d) that explanations of the behaviour of social individuals are always to be rejected as ultimate unless these explanations are framed exclusively in terms of the behaviour of individual human beings;

(e) the explanation of the behaviour of individual human beings must never be in terms of the behaviour of social individuals. [4]

The position opposed to this is "sociological holism" or, as Danto terms it, "methodological socialism" which may be characterized as Danto suggests by simply replacing "every occurrence of "individual human beings" in the theses (a) through (e) ... [above] with the expression "social individuals" and every occurrence of "social individuals" with "individual human beings." [5]

In whatever sense the "individualist" says that "individual human beings" are ultimate in the social world, the "socialist" says that "social individuals" are ultimate.

He cites Marxism as the most conspicuous example of a theory satisfying the specification of methodological socialism. According to historical materialism, what we think and how we act are determined by our relations vis-à-vis the prevailing system of production, any changes in which are not brought about by individual human action.

References

1. A. C. Danto, op. cit. p. 258.
2. ibid.
3. ibid., p. 259.
4. ibid., pp.267-268.
5. ibid., p. 268.

(ii) A clarification of some of the issues.

J. W. N. Watkins tries[1] to clear methodological individualism of two misunderstandings. One objection is, he says, that to make individual dispositions, beliefs and situations the terminus of an explanation in social science implies that a person's psychological make-up is God-given, whereas it is conditioned by, and ought to be explained in terms of, his social inheritance and environment. Watkins counters by saying that methodological individualism does not prohibit attempts to explain the formation of psychological characteristics. It only requires that such explanations should in turn be individualistic, explaining the formation as a result of a series of conscious or unconscious responses by an individual to his changing situation.

Methodological individualism encourages what he calls "innocent" explanations of the development of the human mind as contrasted with "sinister" explanations based on non-psychological factors such as impersonal sociological factors. He cites as an example of the latter the professed belief of Marx that "feudal ideas and bourgeois ideas are more or less literally generated by the water-mill and the steam-engine."[2]

The second misunderstanding Watkins wishes to clear is the confusion of methodological individualism with "psychologism" and "the Conspiracy Theory of Society" (Popper's terms). He characterizes psychologism as the belief that "all large-scale social characteristics are not merely the intended or unintended result of, but a reflection of, individual characteristics."[3] It would appear from this that only a change of heart could put a stop to war.

The conspiracy theory he describes as saying that all large-scale social phenomena are deliberately brought about by individuals or groups of individuals. In the event of a big bad social event this theory leads to a hunt for scape-goats.

Watkins distinguishes methodological individualism from psychologism and the conspiracy theory thus - "... methodological individualism, by imputing unwanted social phenomena to individuals' responses to their situations, in the light of their dispositions and their beliefs, suggests that we may be able to make the phenomena disappear, not by recruiting good men to fill the posts hitherto occupied by bad men, nor by trying to destroy men's socially unfortunate dispositions while fostering their socially beneficial dispositions, but simply by altering the situations they confront."[4]

In the matter of social science research Watkins claims that individualistic explanations are more fruitful avenues to sociological discoveries than those of sociological holists. He discerns a parallel between holism and psychologism which, he claims, explains their common failure to make surprising discoveries. "A large-scale social characteristic should be explained, according to psychologism, as the manifestation of analogous small-scale psychological tendencies in individuals, and according to holism as the manifestation of a largescale tendency in the social whole. In both cases, the explicans does little more than duplicate the explicandum."[5] By contrast, he says that the methodological individualist will try to explain the large-scale effect as the indirect, unexpected, complex product of individual factors none of which, singly, may bear any resemblance to it at all.

Finally, Watkins considers how social explanations should be framed. They should be in terms of individuals, their dispositions and their situations. The social scientists' skill consists in spotting the dispositions relevant to an explanation of a social regularity and then inventing a model which shows how, in a precise type of situation, those dispositions generate some typical regularity.

The method is also applicable, he shows, in the case of the explanation of a unique constellation of events.

The historical situation is reconstructed in a way which reveals how individuals, with their beliefs and dispositions, generated in this particular situation the joint product to be explained. As an example he supposes an historical explanation of the growth of the early Catholic church as relying on the particular decision of Emperor Constantine to give Pope Silvester extensive temporal rights in Italy.

> The explanation is [on first examination] rather ad hoc: an apparently arbitrary fiat plays a key role in it. But if this decision can in turn be explained as the off-spring of a marriage of a set of dispositions (for instance, the Emperor's disposition to subordinate all rival power to himself) to a set of circumstances (for instance, the Emperor's recognition that Christianity could not be crushed but could be tamed if it became the official religion of the Empire), and if the existence of these dispositions and circumstances is convincingly supported by independent evidence, then the area of the arbitrarily given, of sheer brute fact in history, although it can never be made to vanish, will have been significantly reduced.[6]

Maurice Mandelbaum argues "that one cannot understand the actions of human beings as members of a society unless one assumes that there is a group of facts ... 'societal facts' which are as ultimate as are those facts which are 'psychological' in character."[7] "Societal facts", he says, refer to any facts concerning the forms of organization present in a society and "psychological facts" refer to any facts concerning the thoughts and the actions of specific human beings.

He contends that statements concerning societal facts are not reducible without remainder to a conjunction of statements concerning the thoughts and actions of specific individuals. He gives as an example the instance of a person's presenting a withdrawal slip to a bank teller and subsequent receipt of money. The behaviour of these two people towards one another is unintelligible unless it is viewed in terms of their status and role and the concepts of status and role are devoid of meaning unless one interprets them in terms of the organization

of the society to which the individuals belong. He excludes any aspects peripheral to the social transaction such as the explanation of aloofness or friendliness on the part of the teller.

Mandelbaum mentions the ontological objection that societal facts cannot be said to have any status of their own since no such facts would exist if there were not individuals who thought and acted in specific ways. He sees no conflict here. One need not hold, he says, that a society is an entity independent of all human beings in order to hold that societal facts are not reducible to the facts of individual behaviour.

The warrant for this position hinges on the fact that individuals are born into an already functioning societal organization which was independent of them and thus, their societally oriented behaviour was conditioned by an already existing set of societal facts. He will not accept the argument of those wanting to press the ontological objection into remote history to the individuals who were not born into an already existing society and who formed a societal organization by virtue of certain patterns of repeated interpersonal actions. He points out that the issue concerned is one involving the nature of societies as they exist at present. "To argue that the nature of present societal facts is reducible to the facts of individual behaviour because the origins of a particular social system grew up out of certain repeated forms of behaviour is a clear example of the genetic fallacy."[8]

Mandelbaum outlines a second method of dealing with the ontological objection. This, he says, consists in holding that one set of facts may depend for its existence upon another set of facts and yet not be identical with the latter. As an example of such a relationship he cites that which a traditional epiphenomenalist would regard as existing between brain events and the contents of consciousness. The epiphenomenalist, he says, would say that the parts of the individual's field of consciousness are to be found within the specific data of conscious-

ness and not in the brain events upon which consciousness depends. Analogously, Mandelbaum holds that the component parts of a society are the elements of its organization, its specific institutions, and not the individual human beings without whom it would not exist.

Mandelbaum considers secondly the epistemological objection to the thesis that societal facts cannot be reduced to psychological facts. Social concepts are not capable of being pointed to. Consequently, any theory of knowledge which demands that all empirically meaningful concepts must ultimately be reducible to data which can be directly inspected will lead, he says, to the insistence that all societal concepts are reducible to patterns of individual behaviour.

Mandelbaum claims that sufficient disproof of the epistemological objection can be found in the proof that the theory of knowledge above cannot account for our apprehension of the nature of individual action. In the case of a person withdrawing money from the bank what connects the elements of a series of actions such as filling in a withdrawal slip, presenting it to the teller and receiving money, is the person's intention to withdraw money. This intention is not itself a directly observable element.

"Thus, unless it be admitted that we can have knowledge of aspects of human behaviour which are not directly presented to the senses, we cannot understand his behaviour and therefore cannot understand that which we seek to understand; i.e., those societal facts which supposedly are the summations of instances of behaviour of this type."[9]

A third objection to Mandelbaum's thesis is that it interprets individual men as the pawns of society, devoid of initiative, conceiving of them as mere parts of a self-existing social organism. He counters this by pointing out that his thesis does not deny the existence of facts concerning the thoughts and actions of specific individuals. He holds that this latter class of facts and societal facts may interact.

References

1. In J. W. N. Watkins, "Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences" in Gardiner, Theories of History, pp. 503-514.
2. ibid., p. 509.
3. ibid.
4. ibid., p. 510.
5. ibid., p. 512.
6. ibid., p. 514.
7. M. Mandelbaum, "Societal Facts" in Gardiner, Theories of History, p. 478.
8. ibid., p. 485.
9. ibid.p. 487.

(iii) Conclusion.

Is there any good reason to choose between Methodological Individualism and Methodological Socialism? Gellner claims that, in part, the impetus for the argument between holism and individualism in history seems to lie in the fact that views in this field appear to have moral and political implications. Gellner asserts that the simplest argument on this point runs thus: "if rigid, unchangeable, and wide-ranging generalisations are attainable with regard to historical processes, then an outlook which presupposes individual responsibility is misguided."[2]

The Methodological Individualist fears that, if Methodological Socialism is correct, we do not hold our destinies in our own hands and that we are dragged along by the development of the "social individuals." Danto denies that this is entailed by Methodological Socialism. He claims, indeed, that "should we ever be able to explain the behaviour of individual human beings with reference to the behaviour of large-scale processes in social individuals, nothing would prevent us from ... controlling those large-scale processes by operating at the "micro-level", i.e., upon individual human beings."[3]

Science, he observes, is not noted for diminishing our control over things.

References

1. In E. Gellner, "Holism versus Individualism in History and Sociology" in Gardiner, Theories of History, p. 489.
2. ibid.
3. Danto, op. cit., p. 284.

CONCLUSION.

Before starting my programme of reading and thinking about what the most scholarly historians and lucid (and obscure) philosophers have said about history, it would have been reasonable to assume that there could be found, or pieced together, a cogent conclusive definition of what history is. The aphoristic definitions - "une fable convenue" (Napoleon); "history is bunk" (Henry Ford); "just one damned thing after another"; "history is organized memory" (Commager); "the register of the follies and misfortunes of mankind" (Gibbon) - momentarily charm or offend. But, impelled by dim memories of the certainty sensed from schoolboy learning of laws and generalizations in science and axioms and theorems in geometry, the mind dismisses these in quest of the demonstrably conclusive statement.

G. R. Elton says that history "is concerned with all those sayings, thoughts, deeds and sufferings which occurred in the past and have left present deposit; and it deals with them from the point of view of happening, change, and the particular."[1] And as, he claims, no other treatment of man's experience answers to this definition, he sees thereby the demarcation of history from cognate sciences and the establishment of its autonomy.

Herbert Butterfield could be said to be approaching a definition of history when he described it as "the study of effective mediations genuinely leading from something old to something which the historian must regard as new. It is essentially the study of transition, and to the historian the only absolute is change."[2] But that statement doesn't say it all. Butterfield needs many more pages to explain what he means.

Commager says that at its most elementary, history is a story, but not a made-up story; history is a record. "It collects and organizes such facts as are available and relevant, provides some kind of framework for them, and lays down the guidelines for the presentation. It supplies order, harmony, direction, for what might otherwise

be a chaotic assemblage of miscellaneous facts."[3] History, he says, should rest on details and statistics and exploit drama, but it "should control all of these ingredients as an artist controls the ingredients of his materials and the elements of his subject - control them, master them, penetrate them with meaning and suffuse them with imagination."[4]

One is tempted, however, to dismiss this as trite stuff. Descriptions like these may be telling us about some of the thousands of things historians do in the pursuit of their craft; how they make use of antiquarian research, archaeology, epigraphy, philology, palaeography; how they gain greater insight into the human past by using the accumulated statistical information and generalizations of economics, sociology, psychology and anthropology; how they explain, tackle the matter of causation, interpret and judge. But such descriptions do not, in answer to the question, what is history?, bring about the "aha! experience", that's it - that's what history is.

Popper would say that the wrong kind of question is being asked. A fruitful question would be one designed to seek a solution to a specific problem. A "what is -?" question is likely to lead to a discussion of the meanings of words which he believes to be "not only boring, but harmful."[5] According to Magee, Popper's view of the notion that precise knowledge requires precise definition is that it is demonstrably wrong. Every time one defines a term, Magee points out,[6] one has to introduce new terms in the definition (otherwise the definition is circular) and one is then required to define the new terms. In this way one never gets to the real discussion because the necessary preliminaries cannot be completed.

Popper opposed the view of the language analysts who believed that there were no genuine philosophical problems and that the problems of philosophy, if any, were problems of the meanings of words. In the preface to The Logic of Scientific Discovery he stated his belief "that there is at least one philosophical problem in which all thinking men are interested. It is the problem of cosmology:

the problem of understanding the world - including ourselves, and our knowledge, as part of the world."[7]

And of central importance, I believe, to the understanding of this world is a rational understanding of history in accordance with the ideal of rationality expounded by Popper in his autobiography, Unended Quest.[8] He stresses that he rejected, as a procedure, the justification of theories and replaced it by criticism. He points out that, previously, most philosophers had thought that any claim to rationality meant rational justification of one's beliefs. His thesis was that rationality meant rational criticism of one's own theory and of competing theories.

> Thus the old philosophy linked the ideal of rationality with final demonstrable knowledge ... while I linked it with the growth of conjectural knowledge. This itself I linked with the idea of a better and better approximation to truth, or of increasing truth-likeness or verisimilitude. According to this view, finding theories which are better approximations to truth is what the scientist aims at; the aim of science is knowing more and more. This involves the growth of the content of our theories, the growth of our knowledge of the world.[9]

Of all the problems, and concomitant theories purporting to solve or elucidate them, emerging from history, those which have, perhaps, most captured the imagination of the readers of history have been those dealing with the "meaning" of history as a whole and causation and historical laws. Many eminent historians are wary of the pursuit of abstract theories on such matters. Butterfield enjoins us to see the value of history as lying in the "richness of its recovery of the concrete life of the past."[10] "There is not an essence of history that can be got by evaporating the human and the personal factors, the incidental or momentary or local things, and the circumstantial elements, as though at the bottom of the well there were something absolute, some truth independent of time and circumstance."[11]

Commager describes some historians as having "thrown in the sponge, as it were, and taken refuge in

the principle of fortuity"[12] when confronted by the seemingly insuperable difficulty of formulating laws or solving the problems of causation. He cites H. A. L. Fisher as "confessing" in the preface of his History of Europe that:

> One intellectual excitement has ... been denied me. Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations, only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. This is not a doctrine of cynicism and despair. The fact of progress is written plain and large on the page of history;but progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The thoughts of men may flow into the channels which lead to disaster and barbarism.[13]

Necessary progress is absent also from Popper's World 3. He proposed[14] the notion of an objective world of material things (World 1), a subjective world of minds (World 2) and World 3 - "the world of objective structures which are the products, not necessarily intentional, of minds or living creatures;"[15] the world of ideas, art, science, language, ethics and institutions. Magee points out that the World 3 theory offers an analysis of the problem of social change. It is, he says "because of the objective character of man's third-world creations, and the transactions to which this gives rise between him and them, that they - ideas, institutions, languages, ethics, arts, sciences ... - have histories. They do not necessarily progress, but they are open to change ..."[16] He points out further, that Popper's theory explains how an evolutionary process can have a rationale without there being any overall plan or plot or some spirit or vital force moving the process along, as it were, from inside.

After considering the grand system-makers of the philosophy of history and their attempts to solve definitively the problems of meaning, cause and laws, Commager's conclusion is, "that the effort to compress the incalculably vast, infinitely complex, and wantonly elusive stuff of history, into any single framework, or to express it in any single

formula, is doomed to futility."[17]

Further, he sees the multiplicity of historical philosophies and the inability of the most profound historians to agree on the meaning of history as suggesting that the philosophies are dictated not by history itself, but by circumstances, or by the temperament and the training of the historical philosophers. Why, he asks, should we expect an authoritative philosophy of history when we still lack authoritative philosophies of religion, politics, or education? As G. M. Trevelyan has said, philosophy is not something you take to history, it is something you carry away from history. And, perhaps, the World historical reflections (Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen)of the great Jacob Burckhardt is the proof of this statement.

It is not given us to know the causes of things, Commager says, but the search for causes is itself an affluent enterprise, one which enlarges the mind and quickens the sympathies of all who engage in it. "No laws of history command authority, but the study of those manifold forces which ceaselessly play upon history deepens our understanding and brings magnanimity to our judgment. No philosophy encompasses or explains the trackless course of history, but to those who study it with sympathy and understanding and imagination history teaches philosophy. Esto perpetuo."[18]

It is in this teaching function, I believe, that the ultimate value of history lies; not in the facile and spurious attempts at prophesying the future by the deductions of historical analogy, but in the capacity of history to remove prejudice and to train the mind to better understand the world and its complex social and political problems. A mind steeped in a genuine understanding of history would be likely to subscribe to a political, historical or social formula in the mould only of that proposed by Popper: "P.1→TS⇒EE⇒P.2 where P.1 is the initial problem, TS the trial solution proposed, EE the process of error elimination applied to the trial solution

and P.2 the resulting situation, with new problems."[19]

A consequence of the approach embodied in this formula is, says Magee, "the realization that complex structures - whether intellectual, artistic, social, administrative or whatever - are only to be created and changed by stages, through a critical feedback process of successive adjustments. The notion that they can be created, or made over, at a stroke, as if from a blueprint, is an illusion which can never be actualized."[20] A free society permitting the untrammelled assertion of differing proposals, followed by criticism, followed by the genuine possibility of change in the light of criticism is likely, in Popper's view, to be more effective at solving its problems.

I turn to Trevelyan for the final word: "It is the tale of the thing done, even more than its causes and effects, which trains the political judgment by widening the range of sympathy and deepening the approval and disapproval of conscience; that stimulates by example youth to aspire and age to endure; that enables us by the light of what men once have been, to see the thing we are, and dimly to descry the form of what we should be. 'Is not Man's history and Men's history a perpetual evangel?' "[21]

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4. ibid., p. 8.
5. B. Magee, Popper (Fontana, 1973), p. 49.
6. ibid.
7. K. R. Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (Hutchinson of London, 1972), p. 15.
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11. ibid.
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14. B. Magee, op. cit., p. 60.
15. ibid.
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17. H. S. Commager, op. cit., p. 89.
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